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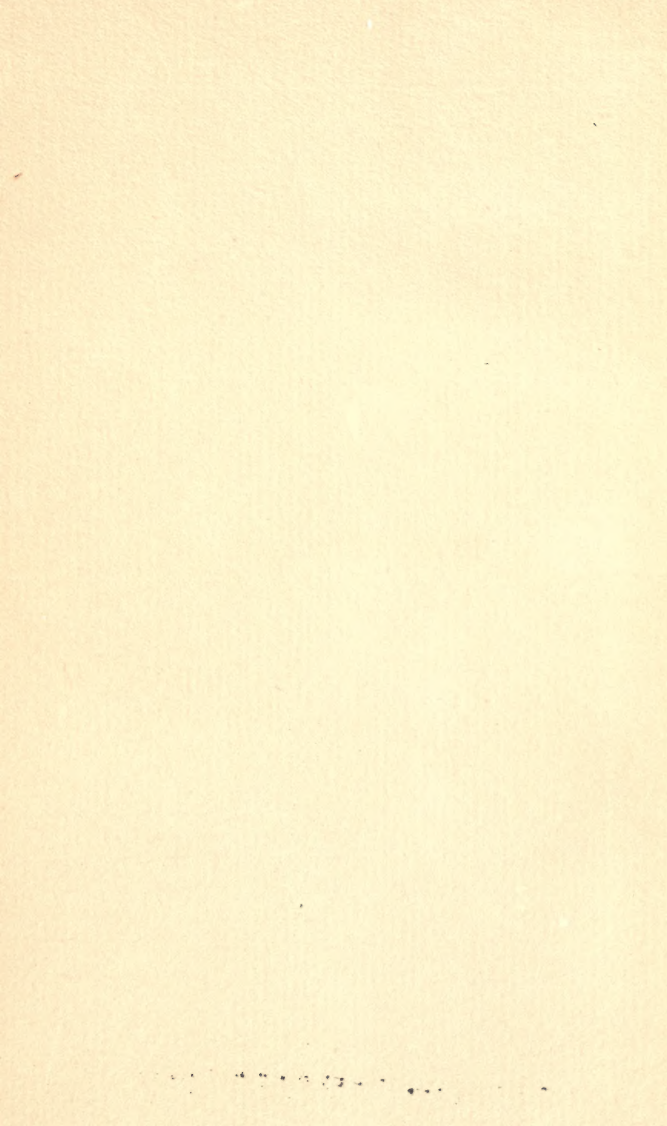
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Daily Thoughts

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DAILY THOUGHTS

FOR

PRIESTS

BY

VERY REV. J. B. HOGAN, S.S., D.D.

PRESIDENT OF ST. JOHN'S SEMINARY
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PREFACE

MOST priests, especially in missionary countries such as ours, are busy men. Interests of all kinds, religious and secular, their own and those of their people, claim their attention almost every day, and at all hours of the day. Those who escape this constant pressure of business or of duty are still liable to be caught up and carried along by the rush of the world around them, and too often they yield to it without resistance. Some are so restless by temperament or by habit, that, even when entirely undisturbed from without, they find it difficult to settle down quietly to anything of a purely mental kind. How detrimental such conditions are to that "life with things unseen" so necessary in the priesthood, need not be insisted upon. The *Non in commotione Dominus* of Scripture, and the *In silentio et quiete proficit anima devota* of the Imitation have become

axioms of the spiritual life. No priest who consults his own experience will be tempted to question them, and this is why we find all those who have seriously at heart their own spiritual welfare coming back from time to time to the resolution of not denying to their poor souls, whatever may happen, the daily nutriment without which they cannot but languish and decline. What the most competent authorities agree in recommending, in one shape or another, as the normal sustenance of a priestly life, is the practice of meditation and the habitual reading of devotional books, especially the "Lives of the Saints." These helps are guaranteed by their rules to members of religious orders, and a growing number of secular priests faithfully employ them. Yet too many still permit themselves to be deprived, of a part at least, of this daily allowance, nor can those who desire it most always succeed in getting it. Shall they, then, because they have failed to secure their regular repast, go all day long, or, it may be, several days, without nutriment? Should they not rather, as men of business often do when compelled to miss their meals, try to sustain their strength by getting some nourishment when and where they can?

It is to supply a need of this kind that the following pages have been written. They consist of truths almost entirely borrowed from the Gospel, and viewed in their bearing on the spirit and duties of the priesthood. The text which introduces each subject is generally a saying of Our Lord himself, and the development of it is gathered from other recorded utterances of His, or from the inspired writings of the Apostles, or from the daily experience of life. A passage from the Fathers, the Imitation, or some other authorized source is generally given at the end, reflecting in human form the heavenly truth, and helping to impress it on the mind of the reader. As a substitute for morning meditation, whenever passed over, one of these thoughts may be taken up at any free moment in the course of the day, or before retiring to rest at night. In its condensed form it will be found sufficient for one spiritual meal, but on condition that it be assimilated slowly. Quickly swallowed food is no better for the soul than for the body.

Hence it is respectfully recommended to those who use this little volume for their spiritual benefit, to avoid all haste in considering the thought they have chosen to dwell upon. Our most sensitive photographic plates require time

to reproduce objects that are feebly lighted ; and in most of us the spiritual apparatus is far from sensitive, and the truths set before us often show but dimly. In order, therefore, to be impressed by them, we have to take time, holding our minds and souls steadily and humbly before the divine truth, especially in its bearing on the priestly life, until it has pictured itself fully within us. The words of Our Blessed Lord, as set forth in the text, will often suffice by themselves to produce the desired effect. When this happens, it will be best to go no further for the time ; the reflections which follow may be reserved for some other occasion.

Outside the Beatitudes which come first, no order has been followed in the arrangement of these "Daily Thoughts." Neither have they been chosen because of their paramount importance. As many more of equal value might have been presented in their place. These happened to come first before the writer. If they prove acceptable to those to whom they are offered, others may follow.

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I

THE BEATITUDES



THE Beatitudes, so named because those who possess them are pronounced by our Lord "*blessed*" (*beati*), designate certain conditions of soul and life, a tone and a spirit little thought of before He came, but which He declares peculiarly suited to His kingdom. This kingdom has only its beginning on earth; it finds its consummation in heaven, and the Beatitudes fit the soul in which they dwell for both stages. Those who are endowed with these gifts, Christ promises to welcome to His kingdom on earth, and to crown in His heavenly kingdom.

The Beatitudes, then, are certain special forms of virtue, of little value in the eyes of the outside world, if believed in at all, but strongly characteristic of the followers of Christ. They are, however, far from being the only distinctive features of the Christian. There is much in the sequel of the Sermon on the Mount and in the rest of the Gospel to which they bear no visible reference; nor is it easy to see why they were singled out in preference to so many others and thus put together,

unless it be that the lack of recognition or reward with which they are met in the world at large, and which is peculiar to them, led our Lord to offer them a special measure of approval and encouragement.

This He does, first, by calling those who possess them "*blessed*," that is, happy, for the Latin word, *beati*, and the Greek *μακάριοι*, mean nothing more; and, next, by holding forth the reward which awaits them in His kingdom. Though presented under various forms, this reward is always the same: "*the kingdom*," "*the land*," mercy, consolation, satiety, a share in the divine Sonship, the vision of God, — all meaning one and the same thing, the possession of true happiness, begun here below and completed in life everlasting.

It is remarkable that our Lord should strike the keynote of happiness at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, which is the summary of His whole moral doctrine; and we are naturally led to ask why, in promulgating His law, He did not appeal rather to the higher motives of duty or of love. The answer given by many is that happiness is our true end, and therefore to be held forth as an inducement more than aught else. But in reality, happiness is the end of man only in this sense, that he is meant by his Creator to be happy. The supreme law of his existence, his true end, is not happiness, but goodness, or moral perfection. No man is bound to be happy, unless in so far as happiness

follows on goodness; but he is bound to be good, whatever may follow.

Yet Christ does not appeal here to the broader and purer motive, but to what is relative and personal: the wish to be happy. And the reason is not far to seek. In human nature there are two mainsprings of action, the one interested, the other unselfish; the former proceeding from and leading back to one's own satisfaction, present or prospective, the latter pointing to somebody or something outside and beyond self. The unselfish one alone seems to have any intrinsic moral value; it is certainly beyond comparison superior to the other; yet they are both indestructible in our nature. No man is entirely unselfish or utterly selfish. No man, even if he would, can sustain himself in a life of virtue exclusively by the higher or unselfish motives, such as duty or love. But although the lower impulses ordinarily lead in a direction opposed to the higher, they sometimes suggest the same course of action. Thus a man may be led to the performance of certain duties by the voice of conscience, and at the same time by the fear of public opinion. It is in this way that the prospect of rewards and punishments has its place and share in the Christian life. Right through the Gospel our Lord appealed to it, because He thoroughly understood human nature, and accurately measured its possibilities.

He knew that personal motives are generally the strongest, the most easily awakened, the most persis-

tent, and He consequently enlisted them on the side of virtue. To do so was especially necessary in dealing with the Jews, to whom the Prophets had always appealed in the name of their own interests. It was necessary for all peoples and for all times, because even in the practice of religion the mass of mankind will always be self-seeking. Yet with these lower motives, others of a higher kind, such as the sense of duty, gratitude, reverence, love, are sure to mingle in some degree, and will thus lift men up to a life which, despite its weaker elements, will belong in its substance to virtue. True wisdom will teach them not to neglect the view of personal interest when it is needed to sustain them, but at the same time to make it more and more a subsidiary element in life, and rest their action chiefly on something beyond and above self.

Sunt qui ita pauperes esse volunt ut nihil illis desit. Sunt et alii mites, sed quandiu nihil dicitur vel agitur nisi eorum arbitrio; patebit vero quam longe sint à vera mansuetudine, si oriatur occasio. Alios quoque lucentes video; sed si de corde procederent illæ lacrymæ, non tam facile solverentur in risum. Sunt alii misericordes sed de his quæ iis non pertinent. Sunt et qui ut alios ad pacem reducerent tam solliciti sunt ut pacifici viderentur, nisi quod eorum commotio, si forte quiquid contra eos dictum aut factum fuerit, tardius universis difficilisque poterit sedari.

S. BERNARD, *Serm. 4, de Adventu.*

II

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cælorum.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." — MATT. v. 3.



WHO are "*the poor in spirit*" to whom Jesus promises His kingdom? A reference to any of the larger commentaries will show how variously these words have been understood, and all because of the very word "*in spirit*" which was seemingly added to remove ambiguity.

Passing over most of these interpretations, we may remark that the Fathers have commonly understood the words as meaning humility. "*Adjunxit spiritu,*" says St. Jerome, "*ut humilitatem intelligeres, non penuriam.*" "*Pauperes spiritu humiles et timentes Deum,*" says St. Augustine. And so also St. Ambrose, St. Gregory, St. Chrysostom. Some have taken them as meaning the spiritually poor who are conscious of their misery, the opposite of those satisfied with themselves, like the Pharisee praying in the temple, or the "*angel*" of

the Apocalypse, *Dicis quia dives sum et locupletatus*. But there seems to be no sufficient reason for abandoning the literal meaning of the terms. In the corresponding reproduction of Christ's discourse by St. Luke (vi. 20), the perplexing word, *spiritu*, is absent. "*Blessed are ye poor*," he says, adding (vi. 24) a corresponding threat against the rich, "*Woe to you that are rich*." It is question, therefore, of true poverty or privation of earthly goods, either as a fact or as a disposition of the soul, that is, detachment from earthly possessions.

To attach the notion of happiness to either was something entirely new to the Jewish people. All through the Old Testament, wealth is looked upon as a blessing, and to possess at least a competency was the ambition of the best. Poverty was looked down upon as a misfortune; yet the poor should not be despised. They were better, if faithful to God, than the wicked even though wealthy. To crush them was a great sin; God was their protector, ever ready to listen to their appeals, and in His name the Prophets recommended them to the justice and the helpful compassion of His people. When the Messiah came He was to be their special defender. *Judicabit pauperes populi et salvos faciet filios pauperum. . . . Parcet pauperi et inopi, et animas pauperum salvos faciet. Ex usuris et iniquitate redimet animas eorum, et honorabile nomen eorum coram illo.* (Ps. lxxi.) *Judicabit in justitia pauperes et*

arguet in æquitate pro mansuetis terræ. (Isaiah xi. 4.)

The poor, therefore, had reason to rejoice at His coming, and would naturally be among the first to seek refuge in His Kingdom. And so they did, as we learn from the history of the early Church. In her bosom they found themselves quite at home. Christ Himself had chosen to be poor; those He loved most He found and left in poverty. He pointed to riches as an almost insuperable obstacle to salvation, *Quam difficile qui pecuniam habent in regnum Dei introibunt* (Mark x., Luke xix.), and to the rich young man who begged to follow Him, He set, as a condition, the abandonment of his wealth: "*If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and then come and follow Me.*" Again and again St. Paul points to the evils of covetousness and to the perils of wealth. Nor are they difficult to find. The pursuit of riches leads to practices unworthy, unfair, unjust. It hardens the heart. Money once got fosters pride. It leads to self-indulgence. It often destroys in the possessor the noblest ideals of life, weighs down his religious aspirations, and makes him utterly worldly.

The teachings of Our Lord and of His apostles sank deeply into the mind of the Church and fashioned the conduct of countless Christian souls. The history of the Saints is a history of detachment, of indifference to wealth, of voluntary sacrifice of the

things of this world. The promise of Our Lord was literally fulfilled in the poor. Wherever His Gospel was accepted, they were henceforth lifted up in their own eyes and in the eyes of their fellow-men, revered, envied, voluntarily served by the highest and the best. The great ones of this world knelt at their feet and did homage in their person to God made man, their common Saviour and brother.

There are few things in which a priest is more commonly expected to be faithful to the teachings of Our Lord than in detachment from worldly possessions. The greater the rush for money all around him, the more urgent is his duty to proclaim aloud the great truth of the Gospel: "*What availeth it a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul,*" and to strengthen the lesson by his example. The priest known to have a hold on his money has little hold on the hearts of his people. Liberality, on the contrary, a readiness to give, draws them to him. And when it is seen that whatever comes to him is sure to make its way to some laudable end, nobody grudges him what he possesses, but, on the contrary, all rejoice to enlarge his means of action. In the interest of his own soul he has to keep himself from the entanglement of speculations and investments, especially of a hazardous kind, from the accumulation of money, except for definite religious purposes, from a too great eagerness to possess it even for the best ends,

and from using questionable methods in acquiring it. All these things would fatally tend to make him unspiritual and unpriestly.

Noli amare bona quæ possessa onerant, amata inquinant, amissa cruciant. — S. BERNARD.

III

THE HUMBLE

"Beati pauperes spiritu."

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." — MATT. v. 3.



IT is remarkable that the great majority of the Fathers should have understood these words, not of poverty, but of humility. The fact that humility is a fundamental Christian virtue may have had its share in inducing them to place it at the very beginning of the sermon on the Mount. Besides, poverty and humility have a close natural connection. The poor are expected to have a sense of their lowliness, and the humble in heart are truly poor in spirit, that is, free from attachment to wealth.

Many are the definitions of humility to be found in theological and ascetical books, but it can scarce be said that they help much to understand that virtue. It may be that no definition is needed or even possible, the virtue in question being only a simple movement or attitude of the soul which, if not experienced in some degree, cannot be understood, and, if experienced, needs only to be pointed

out. *Self-abasement* is perhaps the word that describes it best.

Like the other virtues, its seat is not in the mind, but in the feelings and the will. The unfavorable judgment on one's self is a necessary prerequisite, but does not constitute the virtue. A lowly opinion of self may be forced on the proudest of men without making him humble. He is humble only when he freely accepts the consequences of his faults or of his shortcomings. "*In ipso appetitu*," says St. Thomas (2.2, 61, 2), "*consistit humilitas essentialiter*."

Humility is a corrective and a curative or medicinal virtue. It is the remedy of pride, and like that great evil of our nature, it has its various forms and its various degrees. Thus pride leads men to think too much of themselves; humility calls them back to a true sense of what they are. Pride blinds them to their defects; humility opens their eyes to them. Pride makes men imperious, contemptuous, arrogant; humility makes them modest. Even pagans recognized that special form of humility, and recommended an unassuming manner, modesty of thought and of demeanor (Cicero, *De Officiis*). Pride causes the merits of others to be overlooked; humility keeps the mind alive to them and gives full credit to those who possess them. Pride, with all its lofty airs, is mean enough to seek more consideration than it deserves. Humility is honest, and will no more have the good opinion of others than their money, beyond what it has a right to.

So far humility is only a matter of sincerity and proper feeling, a natural virtue. But, like all other moral dispositions, it may be turned to supernatural purposes, and, in fact, as described, it is already the condition, if not the foundation, of most of the Christian virtues. Spiritual writers show this in detail, and only a little reflection is needed to see the truth of the statement.

Christian humility as we find it in the Saints goes much deeper. It strikes at the very root of pride and leads those in whom it flourishes to the cultivation of feelings and practices extremely uncongenial to the natural man.

The first is a hearty self-contempt; not merely a modest opinion of themselves, or a feeling of humiliation arising from noticeable defects, but something much stronger, — a keen perception of their nothingness before God; an overwhelming sense of the least imperfections still clinging to them, with the result of blinding them equally to their own qualities and to the faults of others. St. Paul deems himself “*the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle.*” In his own eyes he is nothing: “*nil sum.*” And so the Saints in the course of Christian ages — St. Bernard, St. Philip Neri, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, the Curé of Ars, — all speak most disparagingly of themselves and mean every word of it.

The second feature of their humility was to treat themselves in accordance with this self-depreciating

judgment. They instinctively chose the last place. Anything they considered good enough, and most things too good for them. In the matter of food, clothing, accommodation, and the like, they took what was least desirable, and left what was best to others, as being high above them. They grudged themselves what was most necessary, and treated themselves in everything as being of little or no account. If anything went wrong, instead of allowing the blame of it to settle on others, they were ever ready to take it on themselves, and to apologize as if the fault were entirely theirs.

Lastly, their ambition was to be as little thought of by others as by themselves, to be treated by others as they were wont to treat themselves. They had an instinctive objection to marks of respect, declining all honors if unnecessary, considering them as arising from a mistake and anxious to impress upon all how little they deserved them. Admiration and praise were positively painful to them.

These are the heights to which the Saints raised themselves. How far above the reach, or even the aspirations of ordinary Christians, — and even of ordinary priests ! We should at least look up reverently to them, humble ourselves for being so devoid of humility, and pray that we may not become entire strangers to so necessary a virtue. If its higher degrees are beyond us, at least the lower degrees, as described above, are attainable, and we shall have

done much for ourselves and for our work if we make them ours.

“Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.”

“The humble man God protecteth and delivereth; the humble He loveth and consoleth; to the humble He inclineth Himself; on the humble He bestoweth bounteous grace, and after he hath been brought low, raiseth him up unto glory. The humble man in the midst of reproaches remaineth in great peace, for his dependence is on God and not on the world.

“Never think that thou hast made any progress until thou feel that thou art inferior to all.” — IMIT.

11, 2, 2.

IV

THE MEEK

Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." — MATT. v. 5.



WHO are the meek?

They are the gentle, the mild, the sweetly patient; they are those little concerned to defend themselves against ill treatment, but relying rather on God's providence to protect and vindicate them. *Mites sunt*, says St. Augustine, *qui cedunt improbitatibus et non resistunt malo, sed vincunt in bono malum*. Meekness is the natural fruit of detachment and of humility. What inflames men to anger and prompts them to revenge? The sense of being hurt in their pride or in their interests. Take away their concern for both, and all irritation and vindictiveness subsides. Meekness, gentleness, is also the outcome of that charity described by St. Paul: *Charitas patiens est, benigna est, non irritatur, non cogitat malum. Omnia suffert, etc.* (1. Cor. xiii.).

Meekness is the corrective of anger. Anger, like

all the other passions natural to man, is good in itself and evil only when excessive (S. Tho. 2, 2, 9, 158). But it overflows easily, and needs constant watchfulness to be kept within bounds, and this is precisely the function of meekness. Meekness, therefore, is not mere apathy, or a timidity that paralyzes action; neither is it mere softness or lack of spirit. These dispositions, though real faults, may produce not unlike effects; they may facilitate the practice of the virtue, but they are no substitute for it, no constituent part of it. Meekness is most needed by men of strong impulses, and its presence in them is a sign, not of weakness but of strength. It was one of the greatest and most difficult conquests of the Saints, a virtue harder to practise than the greatest austerities.

To hold in check all impatience, all wrath, all resentment; to stand disarmed, as it were, in presence of injustice and violence, is one of the most characteristic features of the Christian spirit. There are few things that our Lord inculcated more forcibly or exhibited more strikingly in His own person. He came to establish the kingdom of God on earth, not by violent conquest, but by gentle persuasion. "*Come and listen to me,*" He said, "*for I am meek and humble of heart.*" He never employed his miraculous power to protect Himself. When in danger, He yielded and withdrew up to the time divinely appointed for His passion and death. And during that terrible ordeal He bore all unresistingly, silently.

As the prophet had foretold: "*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer He opened not His mouth.*" Thus it was that He himself practised what He had so often taught his disciples. In that extreme form by which he was wont to emphasize His teachings, He had told his followers (Matt. v. 39, 42) to yield to injustice and not to resist evil, to love those that hated them, to pray for those that did them wrong. When He sent forth His apostles for the first time it was like sheep in the midst of wolves, and when on their return they spoke of bringing down fire from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritan town, His answer was: "*Ye know not of what Spirit ye are.*" Again we may remark how often similar recommendations occur in the writings of St. Paul. *Non vosmetipsos defendentes, sed date locum irae. . . . Deponite iram, indignationem . . . omnis amaritudo et ira tollatur a vobis. Noli vinci a malo sed vince in bono malum.* By these and similar lessons and examples this new and heavenly virtue was planted in earthly soil. And as it grew and spread, its mysterious power asserted itself more and more. It is by submissiveness and pliancy, by yielding, by enduring without resistance, that the Christians won their way in the world, and finally won the world to them. It is by teaching gentleness, meekness, courtesy, that the Church toned down the pride of the Roman and the rough violence of the barbarian, and created the Knight of the Middle Ages, no less conspicuous

for his tender regard for what was weak than for his fearless bravery.

Gentleness is a special characteristic of the priest. St. Paul, himself a striking model of the virtue, points it out as a distinctive sign of fitness for the ministry. "*Thou, O man of God,*" he writes to Timothy, "*pursue piety, charity, patience, mildness.*" "*The servant of God must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men, with modesty admonishing them that resist the truth.*" And in his direction to Titus regarding the choice of priests and bishops, he tells him to select men of blameless life, neither proud, nor hot-tempered, nor violent; *non superbum, non iracundum, non percussorem.*

This is the tradition of Christian ages all over the Church. Wherever we meet a saint, however strict he may be with himself, he is kind, forbearing, gentle with others. His zeal for the glory of God is always tempered with pity for the sinner. And so should it be with every priest; for what is he, after all, among his fellow men but the representative of one who, when He came among men, was the very embodiment of gentleness and mercy? *Apparuit benignitas et humanitas salvatoris nostri Dei.* Alas! how often this so-called zeal has only succeeded in closing the hearts of men against priest and Church, and led them to a total neglect of the practices of religion, if not to final impenitence.


“ O ye pastors, put away from you all narrowness of heart. Enlarge, enlarge your compassion. You know nothing if you know merely how to command, to reprove, to correct, to expound the letter of the law. Be fathers, — yet that is not enough ; be mothers.” — FÉNELON.

V

THE MOURNERS

Beati qui lugent quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." — MATT. v. 5.

 HE sad and sorrowing, the suffering, the poor, the little ones, oppressed and burdened, are all alike. They are all weak, helpless, neglected, and despised by the world. They all need to be sustained and comforted. The Messiah was expected to be the bearer of that blessing to them and to the whole Jewish people trodden under foot by the Romans. *"Be comforted, be comforted, O my people, saith the Lord."* *"The Lord hath anointed me. He hath sent me to preach to the weak, to heal the contrite of heart (the broken-hearted), to preach a release to the captives, to comfort all that mourn"* (Isaiah xl. 1; lxi. 1, 2). This was the expectation of devout souls at the coming of Christ, as we may gather from the words of the *Benedictus* and of the *Magnificat*, as well as from what the Evangelist tells us of the aged Simeon, that he was *"waiting for the consolation of Israel."*

This promised comfort is nothing else than the kingdom itself, to be procured only initially here below, but as a foretaste of its full enjoyment in heaven. The burden of sorrow and suffering can never be entirely removed from the human race, but it may be indefinitely lightened. All modern progress tends in that direction. There is now less of poverty, of sickness, of great hardship; less of injustice and cruelty between man and man. Life in the average is longer; for the great majority it is broader and more enjoyable. It has been lifted up and placed on a higher plane. Human sympathy has been immeasurably expanded, and has relieved in the same proportion the weight of human affliction and sadness. Now, this has been in a great measure the work of the Gospel, the result of the coming of Christ, and a partial accomplishment of his promise. Yet how much still remains to be borne, and only the harder to bear because of the growing refinement of men's sensibilities, and the more striking contrast of the hardships of the few with the comparative ease and enjoyment of the many. But here again Christ comes and administers a manner and a measure of comfort of which he alone has the secret. Pagan and Jewish philosophy had often dealt with the problem of suffering, and could see in it little more than a punishment dealt out by the Divine justice. The stoics took a different view. They endeavored to persuade themselves and to persuade others that suffering was not an evil, — an

undertaking in which they generally failed ; or that it need never be excessive, since man can always escape from it by self-inflicted death, in which they succeeded but too well. One must read Seneca's "Consolations" to realize how utterly powerless ancient philosophy was to administer comfort to the afflicted ; nor are modern philosophers much more happy in their efforts. They tell us indeed, and truly, that suffering and sorrow are not without their advantages ; that they sober down the thoughtless exuberance of life, and bring back the soul to a truer sense of things ; that by them, better than by any other discipline, are some of man's best qualities developed, — strength, endurance, compassion, helpfulness ; that something of sadness accompanies what is highest in the human soul, — great thoughts, deep feelings, generous resolves ; that the noblest and most loving among men are those who suffer most. All this is true ; and as a speculation it may be beautiful, and even beneficial to those who love to look into the depths of things. But how little genuine, abiding consolation it brings to those who have to endure any great affliction ! The chosen people fared better. Enlightened from above, they learned to see, hidden under natural agencies, the hand of God punishing them for their sins, individual or national, and thereby mercifully compelling them to return to the path of duty. The truly religious among them bowed humbly to the Supreme Will, and bore submissively the calam-

ities which befell them, as we see so beautifully exemplified in the Old Testament saints, — Job, Tobias, David, and many others.

True comfort, however, came only with Christ. It came with the sympathy — genuine, helpful, universal — which He taught His children to cultivate towards every form of human suffering, and which not only has lightened the sorrows of humanity in an incalculable degree through Christian ages, but has so embedded itself in modern civilization, that even where faith has disappeared, active and large-hearted philanthropy will remain.

Solace came directly and abundantly from the teachings of Our Lord regarding the purifying power of suffering, whether voluntarily assumed or humbly submitted to; the immense and endless reward beside which all earthly trials dwindle into insignificance; the assurance, finally, that God is a father, ever near to the sufferer, even when he is seemingly forgotten, and so lovingly watchful over him that the very hairs of his head are counted.

Last of all but not least, consolation flows abundantly from the sufferings of Christ Himself endured for the sake of those who suffer. All the comfort and peace that have come down from the cross of Christ into the hearts of His suffering children for the last eighteen hundred years and continue to fill them each day can neither be known nor imagined. In these and other ways we have even in the present the realization of the promise of Christ.

Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur. Nor has it stopped short at the mere assuagement of sorrow or pain. In the highest order of Christian life it has become perfect contentment, positive joy, —the joy of the apostles that they were deemed worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts v. 41), the joy of St. Paul in the midst of tribulations (11 Cor. 7, 4), the joy of the martyrs, of all the saints who found the secret of positive happiness in the very midst of suffering. Much of what Christ has thus promised and gives to His suffering children reaches them through the ministry of the priest. The priest is the great comforter of his fellow-men. In the hour of sorrow they readily listen to him. He leads them to take a reasonable, hopeful view of things. He suggests means of meeting difficulties. He is actively and generously helpful when he is able, and, what is often most welcome of all, he gives genuine sympathy. Finally he lifts up the thoughts of the sufferer from earth to heaven, recalls the consoling truths of the faith, and points to the eternal reward.

O how full of faith, of generous compassion, of tender love, must the heart of the priest be to fill such an office!

“ When I sink down in gloom or rear,
Hope blighted and delay’d,
Thy whisper, Lord, my heart shall cheer,
‘ ’Tis I ; be not afraid.’ ”

“ Or startled at some sudden blow
If fretful thoughts I feel ;
‘ Fear not, it is but I,’ shall flow
As balm my wound to heal.

“ And O ! when judgment’s trumpet clear
Awakes me from the grave,
Still in its echo may I hear,
‘ ’Tis Christ ; He comes to save.”

— CARD. NEWMAN,

VI

THE MERCIFUL

"Beati misericordes quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur."

"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." — MATT. v. 7.



ERCY, — compassion, — pity, — tender sympathy for the sorrowing and the suffering is one of the most conspicuous and distinctive features of the life which Christ came to establish on earth. He came to soften and expand the hearts of men narrowed and dried up by selfishness. He came to teach them to live not in themselves only, but to share the joys and the sorrows of others. Much of His teaching, as recorded in the Gospel, was in that direction, and the strongest motives were set forth to enforce the lesson. In the pictures He drew of the last judgment He seemed to make all depend on faithfulness to it: *"Come ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me, sick and you visited*

me." Only such will Christ recognize as his followers, only such will He accept from now as His representatives among men. If compassion is an essential quality in the ordinary Christian; if there is no room in the new kingdom for the hard hearted and selfish, how much less can its honors and dignities be bestowed upon them! The priest is chosen to be the refuge and stay of all who suffer. Of him they should be able to say what St. Paul writes of Our Lord (Heb. iv. 15): "*We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are.*"

In the present age, more, if possible, than in any other, the priest has to be alive to the needs of his fellow-men. First, because no quality is more universally valued. The practices of prayer, of humility, of self-denial may bring one nearer to God; but the world fails to appreciate these virtues, and the faithful themselves are little moved by them, if unaccompanied by others more human. But the kind, compassionate, helpful man wins the regard of all.

Next, pity for the needy and suffering is a virtue widely cultivated to-day, even by those who profess no religious faith. This unquestionably beautiful feature of the age is doubtless an afterglow of the Gospel where its direct radiance has been lost. But since the world assumes, and is allowed, the merit of it, the representative of the nobler form of charity should not permit merely philanthropic works (to which besides he ought not to remain a stranger),

to win a higher place in popular estimation than those done under the inspiration of the Gospel. Compassion in the ordinary man is too often either narrow, or short-lived, or merely sentimental. Compassion in a priest should be the opposite of all that. Broad, first of all, and far-reaching. There are many who are moved only by poverty or by physical suffering in their fellow-men. For those whom anguish of soul, humiliation, disappointment, and the like have touched, they have little sympathy; and what they bestow upon the others too often they are ready to withdraw if they can persuade themselves that those who claim their pity are unhappy through their own fault. Not so the priest who has learned his lesson from Christ. Like his Master he extends his mercy to all, to the unworthy as well as to the worthy; to sinners as well as to the just. He is sensible to every form of human suffering, alive to every need, ready to respond so far as he can to every call.

Again, worldly compassion is often ephemeral, short-lived. It prompts to generous deeds, but it soon turns away from the objects that excited them. The habitual sight of privation, suffering, or sorrow is so repugnant to the natural man, that he instinctively strives to forget it. But compassion born of love clings to its object and borrows strength from the unceasing demand that is made upon it. The compassion of the true priest is, like that of his Master, inexhaustible, never tired of helping, of giving. The

bed-ridden patient is faithfully visited ; the solicitor, though irrecoverably helpless, continues to receive assistance ; the ever-relapsing sinner is welcomed and encouraged. Ingratitude stays the course of ordinary pity ; but the pity of the priest, proceeding from a higher source, flows on unceasingly. While keenly alive to the grateful feelings which his beneficence awakens, he seeks not in them his reward, and when they fail, the higher motive still sustains him.

Lastly, true priestly compassion is effective, that is, actively and practically helpful. There is a pity which is all in words. True, sometimes words expressive of genuine sympathy and coming from the heart are the most acceptable — it may be the only acceptable — form of pity. But if only sympathy is offered when help is needed, it is worthless.

“ He that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need, and shall close his heart against him, how doth the charity of God abide in him ? My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” — I JOHN iii. 17.

The same lesson is taught us by St. James (ii. 15). *“ If a brother or sister be naked and want daily food, and one of you say to them : Go in peace ; be you warmed and filled, yet give not those that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit ? ”* Pity of this kind is hollow, unreal. Genuine compassion is always helpful. It knows no rest until the need is met, the suffering allayed.

VII

THE PURE OF HEART

"Beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt."

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." — MATT. v. 8.



THE ordering of the outer man is the first stage of the moral life. The child, the savage, the morally undeveloped think of little beyond external conformity to a given standard of conduct. Human legislation is powerless to go further; and although the Old Law embraced in some way the whole man, it must be confessed that it concerned itself chiefly with externals. As a consequence, in the Jewish conception of duty, there was a prevailing character of outwardness, which, joined to an almost total disregard of inward culture, culminated among the Pharisees in that ostentatious, hollow form of religion to which posterity has given their name.

Against such a conception of virtue the Gospel was a universal protest. In the strongest terms Our Lord denounced the life of the Pharisees as all appearance and outward show, with nothing behind

it but what was worthless (Luke xi. 42 *et seq.*). He explained repeatedly, as in Matt. xv., the comparative insignificance of what was external, and proclaimed that all that was really good or evil proceeds from the heart.

The heart, then, being the true seat of religion and moral goodness, the main concern of the follower of Christ is to improve and embellish it. This implies a twofold process; first, that of planting and cultivating in it the seeds of the moral virtues; and second, that of weeding out whatever might impede their growth. This second process it is which constitutes the cleansing of the heart, and its result is that purity placed by Our Lord among the Beatitudes.

There are numberless degrees of purity of heart, as there are of defilement, yet they may be reduced to a few general categories. The humblest consists in exemption from mortal sin. In the state of sin there are depths deeper and deeper, and to rise from the lower to the higher is praiseworthy and hopeful. But however much of evil the soul may have shaken off, so long as she still clings to any form of it, or has not been reconciled to God and received the pledge of reconciliation in sanctifying grace, she cannot in any sense be spoken of as pure. She becomes substantially so by the reawakening of the divine life within her. Still there may remain the defilement of unforgiven, because unrepented, venial sin. But even when that has disappeared, other things may continue to tarnish her beauty, in

particular those earthly inclinations which, though not positively sinful, yet often lead to sin, and anyhow occupy the heart in a manner detrimental to the higher and nobler feelings which might otherwise fill it. To rid herself of those impediments, in so far as they are voluntary, is the next stage of purification, a lengthened and tedious one, inasmuch as the ill-regulated affections of the heart are ever ready to break out in every direction, and can be kept within bounds only by constant watchfulness and unceasing effort.

When the soul emerges triumphant from the fight ; when she has succeeded in detaching herself not only from what is forbidden, but from what is displeasing or less pleasing to God, from whatever might detract from the freedom and fullness of His service and love, then she has reached a high degree of purity. Yet one higher still may be thought of. It is that in which the ill-regulated impulses of nature almost entirely disappear, leaving the soul in a condition similar to that of the angels, or of little children, or of our first parents, as we picture them before the fall. That exemption from the corrupt instincts of our depraved nature, perfect in the humanity of Our Lord and in the Blessed Virgin, is to be found in various degrees in God's chosen servants. With some it is a gift of early life, with others the reward of a protracted fight against self. But even where these unworthy impulses have practically disappeared, it would be a mistake to believe,

as some authorities would seem to say, that from such souls all affection has vanished save the love of God. The truth is that all the normal, natural affections remain; the Christian virtues inferior to charity continue to play their part; but they are all informed and regulated by the principle of love, and the nearer the soul approaches to God, the more love predominates as the animating principle of action. It is easy to understand how purity of heart thus cultivated, begets an especial fitness for the kingdom of God here below and in eternity. In one of his "Plain and Parochial Sermons" Card. Newman has beautifully shown how only pure souls can enjoy the presence of God, so that holiness is, in the very nature of things, a necessary preparation for the happiness of heaven. Even to see Him, as He can be seen here below, behind the world of sense and in the depths of conscience, nothing fits a soul like being emptied of earthly things. Hence the distinctness and depth with which the Saints, even when possessing little human culture, see into the mysteries of the divine nature and the providential guidance of the world.

"If only thy heart were right, then every created thing would be to thee a mirror of life and a book of holy teaching. There is no creature so little and so vile, that it showeth not forth the goodness of God."


"If there be joy in the world, truly the man of pure heart possesses it." — IMIT. ii. 4.

VIII

HUNGERING AFTER JUSTICE

“Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt justitiam quoniam ipsi saturabuntur.”

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.” — MATT. v. 6.

USTICE has not in the Bible the narrow sense the word bears in modern usage. It means general rectitude and integrity of life, — moral goodness, complete in every direction. Thus understood, justice represents the supreme law of life. To strive for it, to realize it in a substantial measure, is the duty of all. To long for it in a higher degree, to hunger and thirst for its fullness and perfection is the condition of the best and noblest souls. That many such there were among the chosen people, cannot be doubted, — souls keenly alive to the holiness of God and to their own imperfections and unworthiness, saddened by the wickedness of the world, and sighing like Zachary, the father of St. John the Baptist, for the time when sinners would be converted to God, and they themselves might “*serve Him without fear in holiness*

and justice before Him all their days." — LUKE I. 74. Such were the patriarchs and the prophets; such David and the other writers of the psalms; such Tobias, Judith, and numberless others whose names, unknown to history, are recorded in the book of life. They craved for the reign of God in the world and in their own souls.

The consummation of their wishes was to come with the Messiah. "*Orietur in diebus ejus justitia . . . suscipient montes pacem populo et colles justitiam,*" as is said in the prophetic Psalm lxxi. "*Ecce in justitia regnabit rex,*" says Isaiah xxxii. 1. He prays for the same (xlv. 8) "*Rorate cæli desuper et nubes pluant Justum; aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem, et justitia oriatur simul;*" and Daniel points to the same feature as characteristic of the Messianic reign: "*Adducatur justitia sempiterna.*"

The promised Saviour came at length, bringing with him that justice the Saints craved for. Not perfect righteousness, for that is to be found only in heaven, but virtue raised to a level never reached before, and diffused with the Christian faith all over the world. The immense moral change in the human race thus effected by the coming of Christ and by the abiding action of His Church is the accomplishment, incomplete here below, as it should be, yet invaluable, of the promise. But because of the incompleteness of the fulfillment, the hunger and thirst of perfect goodness continues to be felt in this life by all truly Christian souls. Around them they

see evil still prevail to a frightful extent, and in themselves they measure the distance which separates them from that perfect holiness to which they aspire. And while striving with all their might to improve this condition of things, they long for something incomparably better, and they ever pray to God to use His power to that effect. "*Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" The advancement of God's glory, the good of souls, their own spiritual progress, — these are their great objects in this world. To put it in other words: as the supreme wish of the sensual man is pleasure, that of the covetous man money, that of the ambitious man position and power, so the supreme desire of these chosen souls is justice, — the universal reign of God. And what they strive for and pray for comes, according to the Saviour's promise, already here below, but in God's own time, and measure, and way.

A craving for justice in the narrower and modern sense of the term is characteristic of our age. In the most civilized parts of the world, individuals and peoples have a stronger sense of their rights, a greater readiness to vindicate them, and the world at large is in more active sympathy with them and with all those who suffer from oppression or wrong. In the ancient world it was so common to see the weak crushed by the strong, the poor despised by the wealthy, the simple overreached by the artful, and

the honest by the unscrupulous, that the fact seemed to belong in a way to the normal condition of things, and passed almost unnoticed. Nor have things much improved up to the present in countries unfashioned by the Gospel, such as Turkey, Persia, Africa, and China. It is only where the reign of Christ has been established that we find the weak and helpless secure, women and children sheltered by the strong arm of power, and by the still greater force of right universally acknowledged. Through Christian ages the Church was the protectress of the poor and the helpless, "*the widow and the orphan.*" Under her action arose the public institutions and the public opinion which still protects them. Political justice, social justice, human rights, so much spoken of to-day, are only a further extension of the principles sustained and inculcated by her through all ages. They may be exaggerated in our time; they may be mixed up with elements of evil; but in so far as legitimate, they are part of the promise of Christ, and the Church would be unfaithful to her mission if she did not recognize and vindicate them.

The voice of the priest, who is her spokesman, should, when discretion permits, be raised for the right, never on any account for the wrong. No transient advantage, no personal interest should lead him in public or in private to sympathize with wrong-doers, social, economic, or political. It is to him that other men should look when they want to

know what to think, to say, or to do. His sympathies are instinctively with the weak; yet if their claims are unjust he shows them no favor, for popularity with him always yields to principle. He is above parties, above individual or local interests, the representative of what is fair, equitable, just; and, for that very reason, he is respected and trusted by all.


“Qui ad justitiam erudiunt multos, quasi stellæ in perpetuas æternitates.” — DAN. xii. 3.

IX

THE PEACEMAKERS

"Beati pacifici quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur."

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." — MATT. v. 9.

 PEACE, like many other words, has in Scripture a breadth and variety of meaning far beyond its modern acceptation. With us it signifies simply the absence of strife. In the Bible it came by degrees to signify also positive concord, friendship, security, HAPPINESS. In this last and broadest sense it is commonly used in the New Testament. It is also in that wide comprehension that the Redeemer is promised to the world as the "*Prince of peace*" and that His reign is to be a reign of "*justice and abundant peace*" (Ps. lxxi), that is of righteousness and happiness. Peace properly so called, harmony with others, is, of course, an element of that happiness, and Christ came to bring back to men that peace; peace with God, that inestimable blessing so often referred to in the New Testament as the first fruits of the

Redemption, and peace among themselves by mutual forgiveness and mutual love.

But Christ only laid the foundation of both; the blessing itself must be the growth of ages and the work of all men of good will who help to bring their fellow-men nearer to God and nearer to each other. Blessed indeed are they who share in any degree in a thing so welcome to God! Their place in the kingdom is assured to them, and this is the fundamental meaning of the promise.

But they receive furthermore a glorious title, that of sons of God, “*υἱοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ*,” “*filii Dei*.” And well may they be called by that name,—the name given to the angels in the Old Testament and even in the New, for their work is a heavenly one and worthy of the angels; *children of God* too, because like unto God who is a God of peace and love; *children of God*, because continuing the work of His divine Son on earth; *children of God* in the full sense of the expression, when they are admitted to the rest and joy of the everlasting Kingdom.

The mission of peacemaker is in a true sense that of all Christians; but it is pre-eminently that of the priest. The work of the redemption consisted in restoring peace between God and the world; St. Paul describes it thus: (2 COR. v. 19) “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself*.” What Christ did for all on the cross, the priest in His name and by His divine power does for each one of those who appeal to him; through Him each one makes his

peace with God, and in him too God is present, reconciling to Himself His unfaithful children. "*Deus erat in eo mundum reconcilians sibi.*" Who can calculate the relief, the peace, the joy he imparts day after day to sinful but repentant souls, when he sends them away with the assurance of their forgiveness?

At the same time he is peacemaker between man and man. When the harmony of domestic life is disturbed in any degree among his people, he is one of the first to know of it. He watches the causes which, unchecked, will destroy the peace of the household,—the waywardness, or the obstinacy, or the selfishness, or the sensitiveness, or irritability of some member of the family, and by timely warning and assiduous care he dispels the danger. If coldness has already set in, or, worse still, if bitterness of feeling or unkindness of action have estranged from one another those who should live closely united, the priest gently, discreetly, interposes, soothing the irritated feelings, removing the causes of misunderstanding, bringing back sunshine to the darkened home. If contentions and quarrels arise among his people, he is at once alive to the fact, and is never entirely at rest until he has allayed them. Immediate action may be unadvisable. He may have to wait long before his blessed object is achieved; but he constantly bears it in mind, and avails himself of every incident and opening that may lead to it. Meanwhile his general influence,

reaching all his people, is of a sweet, soothing kind. By teaching them to repress pride and selfishness and to cultivate mutual forbearance and love, he is steadily weakening animosities and stopping many of them at their very birth.

But to do all this well, he has to be himself a man of peace, affable, kind to all, on good terms with all. To bring people together, he must have a hold on both sides. He must be fair and friendly to all. Moderation, tact, discretion, are some of his most necessary requisites. His views of abstract right must be largely tempered by charity and a knowledge of human nature. And if his action extends beyond his own people, if he comes forth as the champion of any great cause, his attitude has to be conciliatory, his utterances discreet, his action visibly inspired by the wish to benefit all right-minded men and entirely free from personal ends.


“Keep thyself in peace, and then shalt thou be able to bring others to peace. Thou knowest well how to excuse thyself and glory over thine own deeds, but thou wilt not accept the excuses of others. If thou wish to be borne with, bear also with others.” — IMIT. II. 3.

X

THE PERSECUTED

“Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.”

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” — MATT. V. 10.

 HERE is nothing for which Christ seems more concerned to prepare His Apostles than the active, violent opposition of the world. He warns them repeatedly that they must not expect to fare better than Himself; that they will have to suffer all manner of ill treatment on His account; that they will be taken up and dragged before unscrupulous judges, cast into prison and tortured; that their very friends and relatives will turn against them and betray them; finally that they will be an object of universal distrust and hatred among their fellow-men.

Subsequent events abundantly verified the Saviour’s prediction. The lives of the apostles, so far as we are acquainted with them, seem to have been full of suffering and trials, and all ultimately crowned

by martyrdom. St. Paul, the apostle whom we know best, tells the Corinthians what he had to endure. *"Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and day I was in the depths of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."* — 2 COR. ii. 25. . . .

For three hundred years the history of the Church is a history of persecutions; nor did they cease with the conversion of Constantine. Under many of his successors, confiscation, exile, prison, and death were the lot of Christians true to their faith. Indeed it may be said that at all times the good have had to suffer, and to suffer *"for justice' sake;"* that is, because of their very goodness. The dishonest, the corrupt dislike them, as interfering with their pursuits and their pleasures, and because the very life of the just man is a protest against their methods. It is thus that they are described in the book of Wisdom (ii. 12), *"Let us therefore lie in wait for the just because he is not for our turn (he is of no use to us), and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law, and divulgeth against us the sins of our way of life. He is become a censurer of our thoughts. He is grievous to us, even to behold, for*

his life is not like other men's and his ways are very different."

And so will it be, St. Paul tells us, to the end of the world. "*All that will live godly shall suffer persecution.*" At the hands of the evil-minded, the good will be made to pay the penalty of their goodness; the faithful and fervent will have to bear the criticism of those who choose not to follow in their footsteps; converts to the true faith will forfeit position or fail to reach it because they have not closed their eyes to the light; born Catholics will seek in vain for what they might easily reach if they were known to be indifferent to religious truth, or to have eschewed all belief; men of integrity who hold office or fill positions of trust will be driven from them because they refuse to share in the dishonesty of others or interfere with their crooked ways; at every turn of life the conscientious will have to suffer for conscience' sake.

The priest does not escape the common law. He too has occasionally to suffer for justice' sake. He may be led by a simple sense of duty or by the impulse of zeal to a manner of action which is not approved of by all. He is often found fault with, criticized, not only by the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the wicked, but sometimes by good people, and even by his fellow-priests. But he finds an encouragement that never fails in the voice of his conscience and in the promise of his Divine Master: "*Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in*

heaven." Yet he must be sure that what he has to endure is not of his own making. With the best intentions a man may be injudicious in his action, indiscreet in his methods. His firmness may degenerate into obstinacy, his zeal into intolerance. He may, under the name and cover of duty, become self-righteous, narrow-minded, impatient of contradiction, thus awakening opposition and leading to trials hard to bear, but for which there is no reward.

"It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradictions, and to allow people to think ill and slightingly of us, even when we do and mean well.


"These are often helps to humility, and rid us of vain glory. For then we more earnestly seek God to be witness of what passes within us, when outwardly we are despised by men and little credit is given to us." — IMIT. i. 12.

XI

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

"Si cognovisses!"

"If thou hadst known!" — LUKE xix. 42.

 HE thought which filled the mind of Our Lord when He uttered these words may well haunt every serious mind, — the sad thought of lost opportunities. God's mercies towards His chosen people had been countless and their response had been miserably inadequate. The crowning grace was vouchsafed in the coming of Christ himself. But "*He came unto His own and His own received Him not.*" Jerusalem in particular was hostile to Him from beginning to end, and this, politically and religiously, sealed her fate. And so Our Lord, as He crossed the summit of Mount Olivet and looked down on the doomed city, forgot the clamor of triumph which surrounded Him, and shed tears of pity on the fate of His people blind to the value of the gift offered to them for the last time. *If only thou couldst understand, even at this last day, what would bring thee peace and happiness.*

What Christ saw in the destiny of Jerusalem, each

man has to recognize in his own life ; opportunities of all kinds lost through thoughtlessness, or blindness, or carelessness, or weakness. Who does not find himself with natural gifts undeveloped, which, if cultivated in due time, would have added considerably to his usefulness? How many are constrained to acknowledge that impatience of discipline, disregard of counsel, love of ease and self-indulgence in early life have unfitted them for the noblest tasks of later years ! How often do men let go the chances of making a due return in love and kindness until those to whom they owe most are beyond their reach. How often have they not to grieve over occasions they let slip, to be morally, spiritually beneficial to others, especially to those they knew and loved. Kindness implying little sacrifice, a word of sympathy, of encouragement, of timely advice, would have done much ; but it was not forthcoming. And now when they would give anything to be able to make up for their coldness or carelessness, it is too late.

There are few, if any, more open to this manner of regret than priests. Their opportunities for doing good are so many and so great that it is difficult to keep alive to them all. Yet they all bring with them their corresponding responsibilities. Every soul that opens itself to the influence of a priest, as he speaks from the pulpit, or sits in the tribunal of penance, or visits the sick, or listens to the story of trials, perplexities, and sorrows that are poured into his ear day after day, — every soul gives him a fresh oppor-

tunity to do God's work and to gather fruit for life eternal. Of those he misses, some he can never recall: that unique occasion to stand up and speak out at any cost for what was noble and true; that great charity which appealed to him in vain, because it could be done only at the cost of some great sacrifice; that long-wished-for advantage, finally secured, but at the cost of self-respect; that friendship preserved only by being unfaithful to principle. These opportunities are rare, and if not grasped at once are gone forever, — gone like the souls a priest might have won from sin, or lifted up to sanctity, if he had been watchful, but which he suffered to go before God as he found them.

Happily there are occasions which come back, opportunities which remain. The action of the priest is mostly continuous, and what is missing in it at one time may be made up for at another. Souls neglected may become the objects of special care; works allowed to languish for a time may receive a fresh infusion of vigor and recover all their usefulness. In many ways the past may be redeemed. St. Paul speaks on several occasions of "*redeeming the time*" (Eph. v. 16; Col. iv. 5); that is, making the most of the present and its opportunities. This is a means ever open to those who have to grieve over past losses. While life remains, they can always begin afresh, take up new and still higher purposes, organize new campaigns, fight new battles and win them.

XII

THE WORLDLY SPIRIT

"Non sapis ea quæ Dei sunt, sed ea quæ hominum."

"Thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of man." — MATT. xvi. 23.



ALL through the New Testament a contrast is established between the spirit of God and the spirit of the world; between "worldly wisdom" and "the wisdom from above." "The wisdom of this world," writes St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 19), "is foolishness before God;" and St. James (iii. 15) calls it "earthly, sensual, devilish." It is in the same sense of condemnation that the world itself is spoken of again and again by Christ himself. Closed against the spirit of truth, it hates Him and all those who belong to Him; it rejoices because He goes away, but its triumph is, in reality, vain, for He has conquered the world.

There is, then, in this world, and in some sense identified with the world, a power that is hostile to Christ, that counteracts His influence and tends to destroy His work. What is that power? It is the

unregenerated spirit of man, or man without the Gospel.

All, assuredly, is not evil in the natural man. There still remain in him the natural virtues, a fund of integrity, of humanity, of nobleness. Even unassisted by divine grace he can perform many actions invested with moral goodness. But these are not his predominant features. In the average man the evil elements prevail. His impulses and actions are incomparably more in the direction of evil than of good. He belongs to Satan more than to God. By the very nature of the case, a world composed of such men is hostile to Christ, and the very purpose of His Gospel is to counteract the spirit which animates it. Hence a struggle which is destined to last to the end of time, inasmuch as the opposing forces are both indestructible. "*It is this,*" says F. Faber ("Creator and Creature," p. 362), *which makes earth such a place of struggle and of exile. Proud, exclusive, anxious, hurried, fond of comforts, coveting popularity, with an offensive ostentation of prudence, it is this worldliness that hardens the hearts of men, stops their ears, blinds their eyes, vitiates their tastes, and ties their hands so far as the things of God are concerned.*" The condition of man before the Deluge, as described by Our Lord, was one of worldliness rather than of sin. So was that of the rich man in the parable. The Pharisees were essentially worldlings. There was much respectable observance, much religious profession among them ;

yet in the judgment of Our Lord, they were further from grace than publicans and sinners. They were, in fact, all through His public life the worst enemies of his person and of His Gospel.

The worldly spirit has its degrees. It may reign supreme in a soul, causing her to consider everything in the light of temporal success and enjoyment, without any thought of God or of life beyond the grave. But much more commonly it mingles in varying proportions with the better elements of the soul, and even with her supernatural gifts. It allies itself with real faith, genuine zeal, and all the other virtues. This may be seen in the severe rebuke administered by Our Lord to St. Peter soon after his well-known confession. "*Thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.*" It is after they had received the gift of working miracles that James and John are reprimanded as not knowing to what spirit they belong. This danger besets all Christians, even those whose calling is the holiest and whose intentions are the best. The wisdom of the world is full of seduction. It looks so practical, so well balanced, so full of moderation. It falls in with what is most acceptable in man's natural instincts. In fact, from the very first the difficulty was to escape from the snares of the world, not at its worst, but at its best. Hence the false security which it begets and the ease with which it is followed; whereas to understand the wisdom of the Gospel, and to follow it, demands unceasing watchfulness and constant exertion.

A good priest may become worldly ; a tepid priest is almost sure to be so. His tepidity will usually take the form of worldliness. He will observe the external proprieties of his calling, and get a name for practical wisdom, but there will be little prayer in his life, little humility, little self-denial. Even the good priest is ever in danger of allowing the spirit of the world to supplant the spirit of the Gospel in his soul. It is hard to live in a place and not imbibe its spirit. It is in the air one breathes, in the numberless objects that strike the senses. It is conveyed in every conversation. How, then, is the priest to escape it?

By watchfulness and prayer, — by being ever on his guard, ever purifying his motives, ever praying for help from above.

"Jam de mundo non estis." — JOAN xvii.

XIII

OPENINGS

"Ostium mihi apertum est magnum et evidens."

"A great door is opened to me." — I COR. xvi. 9.



Twice in writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul uses the same expression. Once he tells them of the lengthened stay he makes at Ephesus, "*because a great door is opened to him.*" On another occasion (2 COR. ii. 12) he mentions the disappointment he feels at being unable to avail himself of the opportunity of diffusing the Gospel at Troas where "*a door was open to him in the Lord.*" In these expressions dropped unconsciously it is easy to recognize the apostle, — a man who has only one thing at heart: to convey the Gospel of Christ to all men.

Whoever has any important object at heart is always watching for opportunities to advance it. The merchant is ever seeking for fresh openings to enlarge his trade. The lawyer, ambitious to rise in his profession, watches for cases in which, irrespective of pecuniary profit, he may find an occasion to

display his powers. The aspirant to civic or political honors eagerly grasps every opportunity to win popular favor. And so the true messenger of Christ is ever watching for fresh openings to further the cause of the Gospel and the spiritual good of his fellow men, and ever prompt to detect them, prompt to avail himself of them, and to forget all else in the pursuit of what his heart is set upon. Such we find St. Paul from the hour of his conversion to that of his death. Such were the men of God chosen in various ages to continue the work of the apostles. In all we notice the same singleness of purpose, the same readiness to avail themselves of every opening they could find for the work to which they had devoted their lives.

Every day when a priest awakes to his work and looks around him, how truly may he repeat the words of the Apostle: "*A great door is open to me!*" There are doors wide open every day and all day long: sinners not far from the Kingdom of God, ready in fact to yield to the first touch of a priestly hand; or souls careless in the performance of their duties and leading a life of lukewarmness, yet not ill-disposed, and only waiting for a little help to turn to a life of fervor; or, it may be, a whole generation of children, susceptible, if properly handled, of the happiest and most abiding impressions.

And then there are occasional openings, in regard to individuals or to certain classes, such as non-

Catholics or unbelievers ; circumstances especially favorable for the establishment of a confraternity, of an association for young people or for old, of some blessed devotion from which the happiest results may follow in due time.

The zealous priest is quick to notice such opportunities, and prompt to avail himself of them. Hence the striking difference between the field he cultivates and that around him. In the one there is exuberant fertility ; in the others, barrenness and decay. One would say that while the spiritual life accumulates in the former, it is slowly drained out of the latter. The careless, the indolent, the easy-going priest fails to recognize such openings, or if he notices, he fails to study them, because he instinctively fears that a closer knowledge of them would reveal possibilities such as to destroy the quietude he would fain continue to enjoy in his life of inaction and ease.


Am I alive to the interests of God, eager to advance them, ever watching for openings to do so, ever making the most of them when they come ? The more they are availed of the more numerous and the more inviting are they. The saints met them at every turn of their daily life.

XIV

THE VOICE OF GOD

"Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus."

"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." — I KINGS
iii. 10.

OD speaks to man in many ways. Only to a few, and to them but rarely, does He speak in the form of a miraculous communication; in other ways, however, His voice is heard by all. He reveals Himself in Nature. *"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."* Everything in nature, if only thoughtfully looked at, proclaims its Maker. *"The heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declareth the work of His hands."* — Ps. xviii. 1.

To the religious mind which sees things beneath the surface, God speaks in history; He speaks in passing events, public and personal, which faith, like a divine light, often makes transparent. But more directly, more audibly, more universally, God speaks to man through his conscience. For the voice of conscience, commanding, approving, rebuking with

supreme authority, is and can be but the voice of God. It is heard indeed in the depths of the soul, and is one of the functions of our moral nature. But that nature God so fashioned as to give forth when touched His own law, just as ingeniously contrived instruments are made to gather in human utterances and to repeat them at will.

And then we know that man, especially the Christian, is not left to his unaided faculties. The grace of God is ever present, stirring them up and strengthening them. What we hear, therefore, in the silent chambers of the soul is not merely the voice of our moral nature echoing the voice of God; it is God Himself emphasizing, as it were, that same voice, and causing it to be more distinctly and more accurately heard; the two voices, that of our moral nature and that of grace, being so blended together that, like two notes in unison, they reach the ear as one.

Thus God speaks to us all day long, sometimes in loud, imperative tones, sometimes in gentle whispers. At one time He commands or warns; at another He gently suggests and persuades. For he speaks not only to intimate or to recall positive duties, but also "*to show a more excellent way,*" — the way of the counsels.

Often, too, in the night, when the stir of life has subsided and all is silent around us, does that voice reach us still more distinctly, especially if we lie abed sleepless. Then, indeed, it not unfrequently happens

that the realities, the duties, the responsibilities, the mistakes, the faults, the failings of daily life or of lengthened periods stand out before us with a distinctness and a vividness unknown at any other time. But whenever and however the voice reaches us, our duty in regard to it is to listen and to obey.

“*To listen*,” like the Psalmist: “*Audiam quid loquatur in me Dominus.*” For, without listening, much will be lost of the warnings of conscience and of the promptings of grace. The sound of the alarm clock awakens those who have accustomed themselves to obey the signal. If they disregard its warning for some time, they cease to hear it. So men’s consciences are hardened and deadened by not being heeded; they are sharpened and made ever more delicate by constant attention. Just as the trained ear of the expert detects sounds which go unnoticed by ordinary people, so the man of tender conscience catches appeals from within and from above which are lost to all others. The saints were admirable in this regard. They had trained themselves to heed the faintest sounds of the divine voice.

But we listen only “*to obey.*” If obedience followed not on hearing, better not hear at all. “*He that knew not and did things worthy of stripes,*” says Our Lord, “*shall be beaten with few stripes; but the servant who knew the will of his master and did not according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes.*” — LUKE xii. 47. Knowledge always entails responsibility. Listening and obeying comprise everything. “*Blessed*

are they who hear the word of God and keep it." — LUKE xi. 28. Men are invited to do both through fear or through love. The slave is attentive and he is obedient. He watches the least sign of his master's will, and he hastens to carry it out, because he apprehends the consequence of failing in either. Love reaches the same results, but more easily and more fully. When a mother reposes near the couch of her sick child, she listens even in her sleep, and the least sign of discomfort in the little sufferer awakens her. So is it with those who love God. They are alive to the slightest indications of His will, even in circumstances most calculated to distract their attention. "*I sleep,*" says the spouse in the Canticle, "*and my heart watcheth.*" And as they hear they obey promptly, joyfully, generously.

"Loquere Domine quia audit servus tuus."

*"Good is the cloister's silent shade,
Cold watch and pining fast;
Better the mission's wearing strife,
If there thy lot be cast.*

*Yet none of these perfection needs;
Keep thy heart calm all day,
And catch the words the Spirit there
From hour to hour may say.*

*Then keep thy conscience sensitive ;
No inward token miss ;
And go where grace entices thee ; —
Perfection lies in this."*


FABER.

XV

THE DIVINE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST

"Christi bonus odor sumus."

"We are the good odor of Christ." — 2 COR. ii. 15.

T. PAUL speaks of himself and of his disciple Titus, but his words apply to all those who are called to share in the same work, and who pursue it in the same spirit. The true priest is at all times *"the good odor of Christ."*

Sweet-smelling substances are grateful to all. Orientals in particular have shown a special love for them at all times. *"Ointments and perfumes rejoice the heart,"* says the sage (PROV. xxvii. 9). Isaac inhaled with pleasure the fragrance of Jacob's garment as the latter approached to receive his blessing (GEN. xxvii. 27). God Himself is spoken of (GEN. viii. 21) as welcoming the sweet savor of the holocaust offered by Noah, and right through the Levitical law the burnt offerings are referred to as *"holocausts of sweet odor."* The Canticle of Canticles is, so to speak, all laden with perfumes; and Wisdom (ECCL. xxiv. 20. 21) represents herself as

enriched with aromas of the most varied kinds. Perfumes were part of the gifts offered to Our Lord by the wise men at the beginning of His mortal life, and by Mary Magdalen toward its close. The chief value of the ointment she poured out on the feet of her Lord was its fragrance, which, St. John tells us, filled the whole house (JOHN xii. 3).

This helps us to understand the higher and broader sense of the expression as applied to Our Lord Himself. He is the source of the mysterious fragrance which fills the souls of His children, and which is a participation of His spirit and of His very life. The priest is the medium by which it reaches them. But, just as material objects, in order to transmit an odor, have first to become impregnated by close and continuous contact with the source from which it emanates, so the priest, in order to spread the divine fragrance of Christ around him, has to live in close contact with his Master, has to become familiar with His teachings, to imbibe His spirit,—in a word, to share more abundantly in His life. Without that, he may be active, intelligent, eloquent; yet he will not carry with him the “*good odor of Christ.*” If, on the contrary, he daily imbibes that spirit, if he fills his thoughts with the Gospel, if, according to the counsel of St. Paul (PHIL. ii. 5), he “*has that mind in him which was also in Christ Jesus,*” then indeed he may go forth and mingle with his fellow men, for everywhere he will bring with him the Saviour’s heavenly fragrance.

Its presence in him is not slow to reveal itself. Just as a sweet odor goes forth of itself from a body saturated with it and in a way to be noticed by all, so the spirit of Christ goes forth from a true priest and pervades the atmosphere that surrounds him — a spirit of piety, of faith, of humility, of love — and nobody can approach without in some measure enjoying it. Of Our Saviour it is said that “*all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him and healed all.*” — LUKE VI. 19. So is it with the pious priest; a virtue is ever going forth from him, and healing a number of moral infirmities around him. And even when he is gone, something of his sweet spirit lingers behind, revealing his passage; and people will sometimes say, as the disciples of Emmaus said of Our Lord after He had disappeared from before their eyes: “*Was not our heart burning within us whilst he spoke in the way?*” — LUKE XXIV. 32.

Thus is the holy priest the good odor of Christ. But what is the tepid, the careless, the worldly priest? What does he bring with him when he mingles with his fellow men, and what does he leave behind him?

Must we answer with the prophet Isaiah: “*erit pro suavi odore fœtor?*”


“*Ea debet esse vita et conversatio sacerdotis, ut omnes motus et gressus, atque universa ejus opera cœlestem redoleant gratiam.*” — S. HIERON.

XVI

THE FORGIVING SPIRIT

"Dimittite et dimittemini."

"Forgive and you shall be forgiven." — LUKE vi. 37.

F all the moral features introduced for the first time into the world by the Gospel, there is none more characteristic than the law of forgiveness. The pagan world knew nothing of it. Not to take revenge on those at whose hands one had suffered a wrong, was in its eyes a weakness and a dishonor. History tells of one of its heroes whose boast, at his last hour, was that no one had done more good to his friends or more harm to his enemies. Nor was the Jewish spirit much different, as may be seen all through the Old Testament. The Law itself compounds with the blind impulse of revenge, allowing retaliation to the extent of doing to another as much harm as one has suffered from him. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ lets us see how the popular maxims of the day formulated and emphasized the privilege; but He refers to them only to condemn them.

Revenge He forbids in the strongest and most unqualified manner, — not once but repeatedly, — not as a counsel, but as a rigorous precept. *“Forgive and you shall be forgiven. Judge not and you shall not be judged. Condemn not and you shall not be condemned. With the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you.”* — LUKE vi. 37, 38.

This emphatic lesson, we may add, comes in the shape of a development of Our Lord’s answer to the inquiry of Peter as to how often he should forgive. *“Not only seven times but seventy times seven times;”* that is, indefinitely. In the Sermon on the Mount He goes farther still, completely disarming, as it were, His disciples in presence of wrongdoers. *“You have heard: ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’; but I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . I say to you: love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.”*

The whole doctrine is emphasized in the most striking manner in the parable of the unfaithful steward who refuses to show leniency to his fellow servant (MATT. xviii. 23). Surely the clemency and liberality of his master should have taught him to be, in some degree at least, merciful and generous; but as he thinks only of his rights he forfeits the incalculable favor bestowed upon him.

Thus hope, fear, shame gratitude, every powerful

motive, is appealed to in turn to win his pardon for the offending one. And in order that the lesson should not be at any time forgotten, Our Lord embodies it in the prayer which He left for the daily use of His children through all ages: "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.*"

Generally speaking, a good priest has little to forgive. Yet he may have enemies. He may have made them without knowing it, simply by faithfulness to some obvious duty. Sometimes he may be provoked to anger because he has been meanly treated, or unjustly accused, or defrauded of his rights. His good name may have suffered from unfriendly and unfair criticism. He may have to suffer from an habitual opposition to his views and methods in those with whom he lives, or from a lack of regard for his convenience or for his feelings. And though, at any given moment, the friction may be only slight, yet its continuance may prove very trying, and give rise to irritation and a wish to retaliate. But he hears in the depths of his soul the voice of Christ, repeating the law of forgiveness; and it is echoed in the minds of all around him; for a priest lenient to those who have offended him and ever ready to defend them, is what the people look for; but the sight of a priest, hard, unforgiving, vindictive, would shock and sadden them.

"FORGIVE AND YOU SHALL BE FORGIVEN."

" Thus Christ has placed our fate in our own hands. We are made our own judges. To each one He says : ' Choose, pronounce ; my sentence will follow thine. Forgive and thou art forgiven ! Who can expect to be spared if he will not spare himself ? ' " — CHRYSOST. in MATT. xix.

XVII

ASKING FORGIVENESS

“Si offers munus tuum ad altare, et ibi recordatus fueris quia frater tuus habet aliquid adversum te, relinque ibi munus tuum ante altare et vade prius reconciliari fratri tuo, et tunc veniens offeres munus tuum.”

“If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.” — MATT. v. 23.



TO make reparation for any pain inflicted, voluntarily or involuntarily, on another; to explain, to apologize, and thereby to assuage, if not to remove entirely, the discomfort caused, is so obvious a duty and so natural an impulse, that it would seem unnecessary to recall, still less to emphasize it. Yet Our blessed Lord does both. He knows that what seems so easy often proves difficult, and that what should be the universal practice is but too likely to be neglected, even among His followers.

To escape the obligation, excuses are not wanting. It is alleged that if pain was caused it was not intended, or that it arose, not from what was said or done, but from the obtuseness, or the mental obliquity, or the extreme sensitiveness, or the exorbitant claims of the aggrieved one. And if the wound was inflicted voluntarily, it is claimed that it was done under provocation, or in self-defence, or even for the positive benefit of the sufferer.

But such excuses are generally insufficient. If I have involuntarily misled another in a way to inconvenience him, I feel bound to correct the mistake. If I have momentarily interfered with his possessions or with his bodily comfort, I am obliged to cease as soon as I notice the undue interference. Why should I be less constrained to withdraw that whereby I have wounded his feelings?

When it is only a question of explaining, of removing a misunderstanding, there is no excuse for omitting it. It is when we have to acknowledge ourselves at fault that the duty becomes more unpleasant; but it is then also that its performance does us most credit. To confess one's faults or mistakes, to acknowledge and to undo the evil one has done, is always noble and beautiful. There is nobody more ready to apologize than a gentleman. A disregard for the feelings of others is the outcome of coarse feeling, or of pride, or of hardness of heart.

There is no lesson more forcibly inculcated by

Our divine Lord than that of forgiveness of those against whom we have a grievance, great or small. But in the present instance He teaches us to ask forgiveness. He supposes that another has something against us, real or imaginary, and He would have us dispel the cloud that has arisen between us. This can be done, as a rule, only by taking a step of the kind He recommends. “*Vade reconciliari fratri tuo.*”

Friends whom some sort of unkindness has separated may bear each other no malice; yet if they nurse their grievance in silence, they are almost sure to magnify it and to widen the separation. Only by meeting afresh can be removed what divides them. In strict justice it would be for the guilty one to move first. But each one may have or believe he has a grievance against the other, and is naturally more keenly alive to his own side of the case. He will say to himself: Let the other come to me; I am ready to meet him. But if the other says the same, it practically means endless estrangement.

If we would lead others to acknowledge their share of the responsibility, the best way is to accept fully our own. Our generosity will shame them at least into justice. Hence Our Lord makes no distinction. He considers only the feelings of the aggrieved one, and bids us win back his friendship. And this he would have us do “*at once*,” just as St. Paul, says Chrysostom, would not have the darkness of night find anger still alive in the bosom of

the Christian. "*Let not the sun go down upon your anger.*" — EPHES. iv. 26. So without delay Christ would have us repress it in the hearts of others. He fears that the solitude of the night may aggravate the pain. The occupations of the day divert the thoughts of the sufferer from it, but left to himself in the night he becomes absorbed in it. And why should the dart be left rankling in the flesh of another if it can be withdrawn at once? Go then, says Our Lord, go without delay ; suspend the sacred action already begun. Though welcome to God, there is something still more welcome to Him, — to be at peace with thy brother, and to remove all sadness and bitterness from his heart.

The manner of carrying out the injunction will be easily found if one only enters into the spirit from which it proceeds. As a rule the sooner misunderstandings are removed the better. Neglected, the sore is liable to fester ; yet it is sometimes better to let it heal of itself. There are petty grievances which had better be ignored. There are explanations which had better not be entered into. They might lead to fresh altercations and do more harm than good. A kind act, a bright smile, an unmistakable token of affection, may do more than aught else to remove misapprehensions or atone for thoughtlessly inflicted wrong. A priest has to be mindful of all this. In many ways, without meaning it, he may cause pain to those with whom he lives or to those to whom he ministers. There is much more sensi-

tiveness in people than they exhibit. If he finds that he has wounded any, he should consider it a duty and a pleasure to administer the healing remedy in the happiest and most appropriate way.

“Non dixit: Cum graviter offensus es tunc reconciliari; sed, Etiam si leve quidpiam contra te habuerit. Neque adjecit: Sive juste sive injuste, sed simpliciter, Si habuerit aliquid adversum te.” — CHRYSOST. in MATT. xvi. 9-10.

XVIII

BELONGING TO CHRIST

"Non estis vestri."

"You are not your own." — I COR. vi. 19.

IN one sense, and that the most obvious, no man is his own. God made him. He sustains him at every moment in existence. Man has nothing, is nothing, but from God. He belongs to God in such a way that no human possession or right can give any adequate conception of it.

Yet it is not in reference to these indefeasible claims of God that St. Paul denies to men the right to dispose of themselves. It is because of their relations with Christ. Christ *redeemed* them; that is, He bought them back. He purchased them at the cost of His life. They are, therefore, His, not their own. His rights over them are unlimited. He may call them out at any time as His soldiers, or as His slaves, and require of them any service, even if leading to the sacrifice of their lives.

But His actual demands on them are infinitely less. Indeed, He came to lighten for His people the burden of the law which these traditions had

rendered unbearable. "*His own commandments are not heavy*," writes St. John (1. v. 3), and He himself assures us that "*His yoke is sweet and His burden light*," not only because of the love that helps to bear it, but because of the fewness of the precepts that He enjoins on His followers. Thus the Christian enjoys in the ordinary course of life almost the same freedom as other men, and is practically as much *his own* as they claim to be; yet the freedom is like that of a child in his father's house, — wide and pleasant, but limited by love and by an ever-present disposition to obey.

But what is left by God at the disposal of His children, they can bring back to Him at any time, and offer as a free and loving gift. This is the meaning of religious vows; and, so far as they extend, the consecrated soul is *no longer her own*. And what is done in obedience to a vow may be done freely. Thus St. Paul describes himself as free, but relinquishing that freedom for the good of others; "*liber essem omnibus, omnium me servum feci* (1 COR. ix. 19) . . . *Omnibus omnia factus sum ut omnis facerem salvos*." His proudest title, the one he most rejoices in, is that of servant, or rather, *slave of Christ*; that is, of one who had given up his freedom to Christ and was no longer his own. Such is the true condition of the priest. In the eyes of many he is independent and free, much more than the ordinary man; in reality few are so constrained and tied down as he is. By his vocation

freely accepted he belongs to the work of the priesthood. He is no longer his own. This is one of the fundamental differences between a profession and a vocation. A man chooses a profession, he chooses it to suit himself, and follows it to any extent he thinks proper. In a vocation, the choice is not his; he is chosen, and simply responds to the call. He gives himself up to the work with all he is and all he has; his time, his talents, his knowledge and culture, his health — if needs be, his very life. Like St. Paul he is ready at all times to spend and to be spent for the souls of his people; “*ego autem libentissime impendam et superimpendar ipse pro animabus vestris.*” — 2 COR. xii. 15. Habitually to withdraw anything from that fulness of service; to devote any notable part of his energies to other purposes; to divide his life, and give one share only to the ends of the priesthood, making over the rest on whatever he may fancy, would be lowering his vocation to the level of an ordinary profession. The priest is a steward in charge of interests not his own. He is a servant, a servant of all work, expected to be helpful all round and all day long. He can work for nobody but his Master. His rule is that of Our Lord himself; “*In his quæ Patris mei sunt oportet me esse.*”

Priests of God, *you are not your own.*

XIX

RENOVATION OF SPIRIT

"Admoneo te ut resuscites gratiam quæ in te est per impositionem manuum mearum."

"I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands." —
2 TIM. i. 6.



HE grace which St. Paul here speaks of has come to every priest in his ordination. Secular dignities bring nothing to the soul of the recipient, but sacred authority comes laden with divine gifts. With it is imparted to the soul a twofold grace ; a grace of sanctification which lifts her up to a higher sphere of divine life and brings her nearer to God ; a grace of help from above, ever present, and aiding both to recognize the responsibilities which have been put upon her and to be faithful to them. In other words, a priest, by the grace of his ordination, has at all times a special assistance from God to see where his duty lies and to do it. He has special impulses special warnings as to what is suited or unsuited to his condition, an

intuitive sense of the proprieties of the priesthood, and, at the same time, a facility to conform to them seldom found outside that sacred calling. The unbelieving world finds it difficult to give him credit for the life of chastity, of charity, of self-devotion, which he professes to follow; the more reflective among the faithful look up to him with admiration; but he knows himself that he is as weak as any among them, and that, like St. Paul, his strength comes from God. "*By the Grace of God I am what I am.*" — I COR. XV. 10.

St. Paul adds: "*and His grace in me has not been void,*" thereby giving to understand that, like all the other graces of God, the grace of ordination is only a help, acting, not by itself, but in conjunction with the free will of the recipient, and which consequently may be neglected, and, as happens to all unused vital power, may gradually lose its energy. The spirit of faith, of reverence, of piety, of zeal, so prominent in the life of a young priest, may gradually decline, so as to make him, after a few years, very unlike his former self. This, indeed, is what almost infallibly happens, unless the downward tendency be counteracted by unceasing vigilance and untiring effort. St. Paul was apprehensive lest such a misfortune should happen to even his beloved Timothy. Wherefore he writes to him: "*Neglect not the grace that is in thee.*" — I TIM. iv. 14.

Grace may be neglected and wasted in various ways: by positive, conscious resistance to its

promptings ; by fickleness of purpose, making obedience uneven and unsteady ; by thoughtlessness and mental dissipation, which prevents the voice of God from being heard, and His divine impulses from being felt in the soul. But whatever the cause, the result is always the same, and always deplorable ; a gradual blunting of the moral and spiritual sense, a hardening of the heart to divine influences, a constant loss of power.

But it is always possible to rescue one's self from such a condition ; to *rekindle* — the very expression used by St. Paul (*ἀναζωπυρεῖν*) — the smouldering embers, and fan them into a bright flame. Sometimes the work is easy enough. There are events which suddenly throw back a soul upon herself, and give her the true measure of her weakness and destitution. Or, again, God lights up directly the hidden places within her, and fear, or love, or a salutary sense of shame, does the rest. But, as a rule, recovery is slow and difficult. It is often easier to escape from sin than from tepidity. Yet it can be done, and by the usual, divinely appointed methods : constant striving, watchfulness, and prayer.


“ I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands.”

XX

THE SERVANT OF CHRIST

"Domine, quid me vis facere?"

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—ACTS
ix. 6.

N act of submission to God's will, and a general profession of readiness to carry it out, may mean much or little, according to the real disposition, half-hearted or generous, of the speaker. The words of the text, uttered by St. Paul when he was cast down by the powerful and merciful hand of the Saviour, have to be understood in their broadest and fullest sense. They were the cry of unconditional surrender, a protestation of unlimited obedience to Him whom he then and there recognized as his Lord and his God; and his whole subsequent life tells us how fully and faithfully he kept his word. The life to which he was called was not to be an easy or a pleasant one. On the contrary, it was to be one of much trial and suffering, and he was told so from the beginning. *"I will show him,"* says Our Lord

to Ananias, "*how great things he must suffer for my name's sake* ; and, later on, as he goes up to Jerusalem, he is warned that "*bonds and tribulations*" await him there. "*But I fear none of these things*," he says, "*nor do I make my life of any account, so that I may consummate my course and the ministry of the word which I received from the Lord Jesus.*"—ACTS xx. 23, 4. And further on in the same journey, being cautioned afresh as to what awaits him, he replies : "*What do you mean weeping and afflicting my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*"

And such, in a humble measure, has every true priest to be. He is, as St. Paul loves to call himself, the servant, the slave of Christ, engaged in His personal service, bound to carry out His will in all things and to know no other law. "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" This is the keynote of his life.

I. *It is, to begin with, that of his vocation.* He aspires to the priesthood, not for the comforts, or the emoluments, or the credit it may bring with it ; not even primarily for his own spiritual benefit, but for the loving and devoted service of Him whose voice he recognized in the call. He joins the ranks to be the soldier of Christ, to fight His battles, and to bear bravely the hardships of the campaign. The prospect of pleasures to forego, of sacrifices to make, far from deterring, invites him all the more, since it gives him a precious opportunity of proving his devotion,

2. *It is his guiding principle in critical emergencies.* There are occasions where various courses are open to him, all allowable, all honorable, but not all equally welcome to God. It may be a position to seek for, or to accept, or to decline ; or, again, a work outside his ordinary duties. Now to make his choice, the true priest has but one rule to go by, one question to ask : “ *Domine, quid vis me facere ?* ” The answer which he hears within him may be to the natural man most unwelcome ; it may point to the sacrifice of some much-wished-for benefit or enjoyment, or to the performance of some tedious, ungrateful task, or to a course likely to be misunderstood and censured. It matters not. If in it he recognizes the will of the Master, it will be done at any cost.

3. *It is his rule of each day.* The servant or the workman whose occupations are varied, waits every morning on his master, or his employer, to have his daily task assigned to him. In like manner the priest, alive to his true condition, realizes from his first awaking that he is not free to do as he likes with the new day that dawns upon him. His first thoughts therefore revert to his Master, and his first concern is to know what He expects of him. This is one of the objects of his morning meditation, to look into the day that is before him, and to measure the work that he is expected to do for the honor of Christ and for the good of souls. “ *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?* ” Happy the priest who, in

great things and in small, is thus ever guided by a sense of loyalty to his Lord. Happy the priest whose life from beginning to end is one of loving obedience. He need not fear death, for at whatever time the Master may come to call him away, he will be found watching, working, ready. "*Blessed is that servant whom when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing.*" — LUKE xxiv. 46.

XXI

PITY

"Misereor super turbam."

"I have compassion on the multitude." — MATT.
xv. 32.



CHRIST, the incarnate Son of God, was all compassion. Compassion for fallen man it was that brought Him down from heaven and led Him up to Calvary. His Incarnation and His death, as seen in the light of faith, are deeds of supreme, boundless pity, such as man could never have looked for or imagined. To accomplish them the Eternal Son had to divest Himself, or as St. Paul says, "*to empty Himself*" — "*exinanivit semetipsum*" — of attributes and privileges seemingly inseparable from His divine nature.

And as compassion inspired His coming, so it pervaded and colored His whole mortal life, revealing itself at every step under the most touching forms, and extending to every shape of human misery. Thus in reading the Gospel one cannot fail to notice in the first place how strongly physical suffering

appealed to Him wherever He met it. "*He went about,*" says St. Matthew iv. 23, "*healing all manner of sickness and every infirmity among the people.*" The blind, the paralyzed, the deaf and dumb, were lead to him, "*and they were all healed.*" The most loathsome forms of disease were powerless to repel Him. He gently laid His hand upon the stricken ones and they were cured. Those poor outcasts, the lepers, approached Him freely and were restored to health. In short, His whole public life is filled with such mercies. Nobody ever appealed to Him in vain. Even when not appealed to, the very sight of human suffering was enough to move Him. He was not asked, he was not expected, to raise to life the poor widow's only son; but he saw her utter bereavement and that was enough. "*He gave him to his mother.*" — LUKE vii. 15. And so with the sufferer at the pool of Bethsaida. He finds him exhausted and disheartened by his thirty-eight years of helpless misery, and by his long unavailing expectation beside the pool; at once He bids him to arise and walk. And so again with the blind man whose story is so graphically told in the ninth chapter of St. John.

He is not less alive to the more common needs of those around Him. When the crowds followed Him into the desert and, in their eagerness to hear Him, forgot their necessary sustenance, He is mindful of it. It is on one of these occasions that He spoke the touching words recorded by St. Matthew

(xv. 32): "*I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with me now three days and have not what to eat, and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way;*" and that thereupon he wrought in their favor the wonderful multiplication of the loaves and the fishes. The very sight of the grief of Martha and Mary was enough to move Him to tears; while, at the wedding feast of Cana, He actually wrought a miracle in order to prolong the enjoyment of the assembled guests and spare a humiliation to those who had invited them.

That tender regard for the feelings of others reveals itself most strikingly in His treatment of those who were specially despised or hated by the Jews. He visits the Samaritans and stays several days with them, speaking more openly of Himself to them than He had done to his own, and subsequently we always find him referring to them in terms of kindness. Nor is His action different with regard to the publicans. He visits them, He eats with them, he chooses one among them, St. Matthew, for an apostle. If His enemies upbraid Him with the favor He shows them, He answers by the declaration, that it was, after all, for sinners He had come.

Indeed, His tender pity for sinners is perhaps the most striking aspect of His divine compassion. There was in His soul a horror of sin beyond anything that the human mind can imagine. The Saints tell us in their writings how loathsome sin was in their

sight; and they had but a faint image of the reality, for God alone can see sin in its true light. And yet how lovingly He pictures sinners in the parables of the lost sheep and of the Prodigal Son! With what merciful condescension He welcomes them when they approach Him! How effectively he repels the accusers of the woman taken in adultery! How warmly he pleads the cause of Mary Magdalen repentant at His feet! How generously he promises to the penitent thief an immediate share in His Kingdom! At the bidding of the Pharisees and the priests, Jerusalem had repeatedly declined to listen to Him. He had been constantly opposed by those in power. Yet at the very moment they were planning to take away His life, He forgets their obstinacy, their perverse blindness. Looking down from Mount Olivet on the devoted city, He weeps over her impending fate: "*Videns civitatem flevit super illam;*" and one of His last words on Calvary is a touching appeal for those who had nailed Him to the cross: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Thus the life of Our Lord from beginning to end was an unceasing exercise of the purest, the holiest, the most generous and most indulgent compassion.

Who would not love one so merciful and good?

Who would not strive to be like Him?

XXII

HOW TO BEAR HONORS

"Rectorem te posuerunt? Noli extolli; esto in illis quasi unus ex ipsis. Curam illorum habe."

"Have they made thee ruler? Be not lifted up: be among them as one of them. Have care of them, and so (then) sit down."—ECCL. xxxii. 1.



THE advice of Ecclesiasticus is addressed, as may be seen by the context, to the steward chosen to preside at a festive celebration; but it applies without distinction to all men invested with authority. For it is the universal tendency of those who have been raised, it matters not how, above their fellow-men, to turn what was given them for the public good to self-exaltation and personal profit.

Even those intrusted in any degree with spiritual power are not exempt from the temptation. They, too, are apt to forget from whence they have been taken, to look down upon those to whom they originally belonged, and, in the enjoyment of their privileges, to lose sight of the very work for which

they were chosen,—to minister to the needs of others. That such a disposition showed itself from the very beginning, we may gather from the warning of St. Peter (1 Peter v. 3) to the “*presbyters*” of his time, not to lord it over their flocks, but rather to win them gently by their examples; and history shows how the evil was ever breaking out afresh in subsequent ages. “*The pride of Church dignitaries*,” says St. Jerome (in. Cap. 18, Ezech.), “*is wont to make their power oppressive*,” and the Fathers, as Ambrose, Gregory, Bernard, are incessantly reminding them of the lesson of Ecclesiasticus. It is good, therefore, for us to consider it and take it to heart.

“*Have they made thee a ruler? Be not lifted up; be among them as one of them. Have care of them, and when thou hast acquitted thyself of all thy charge, (only then) take thy place.*” In other words, “*remember that thou wert at first no better than those who are now placed under thee; and that thou still remainest in reality only their equal; nay more, that, in a true sense, thou hast become their servant, since it is for them, not for myself, that thou hast been raised in dignity; and, therefore, as it is the duty of the host to attend to his guests, and to think of himself only when they have been provided for, so shouldst thou forget thy very needs in thy concern to minister to the needs of others.*”

Have I done so hitherto? Has my life in the priesthood been a life of entire consecration to the service of God’s children? Is there not in me a

tendency to make it a life of self-seeking, in which the love of worldly honors, of comfort, of sensual enjoyment, is gradually superseding the pursuit of God's honor and the love of souls ?

Do I keep alive within me the sympathies which bind the heart of a priest to his people ? Do I truly remain one of them — "*be among them as one of them*" — never looking down even on the weakest or the worst, never hard or unfeeling, but tender, compassionate, helpful, cordially sharing the joys and the sorrows of all ? Do I remember all day long that I belong to them, not to myself, and that the very names by which my calling is commonly designated, — *officium*, — *ministerium*, — are expressive not of dignity, but of duty ; not of the rights of a master, but of the menial duties of a servant ?

This is the law laid down by Christ himself to His apostles : "*he that will be first among you shall be your servant*," — MATT. xx. ; and this St. Paul so admirably practised : "*I made myself the servant of all*." — I COR. ix.

"*Unde cuncti qui præsunt non in se potestatem debent ordinis sed æqualitatem pensare conditionis ; nec præesse se hominibus gaudeant, sed prodesse.*" — GREG. M. II Pastor. 6.

XXIII

SELF-DENIAL

“ Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum.”

“ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.” — MATT. xvi. 24.



ENIAL means properly the contradiction of a statement. But in Scripture, as well as in common use, it is applied also to persons. Peter is said to have denied his Master; and Christ himself threatens those who deny Him before men, that He will deny them before His Father who is in heaven. To deny, thus means to disregard, to ignore, to disown. And it is in this sense that Our Lord speaks of *denying one's self*. He is the first to use the expression thus; and, as employed by Him, it means that to follow Him,—to the death of the cross, if needs be,—“*tollat crucem suam*,” a man must thrust aside all care and concern for himself, must disregard the instincts of his nature that make him shrink from suffering and death, and go forth in the service of his Lord to meet whatever awaits him. If he is held back by the love of ease and enjoy-

ment, by the fear of privation and suffering, he cannot face the consequences of the Christian profession. He must, therefore, learn to refuse himself such pleasure as may interfere with his purpose. This is self-denial. "*If you know,*" says St. Chrysostom, "*what it is to deny, that is, to disown, to ignore another, then you know what it is to deny yourself. If you make no account of an individual, you heed not his appeals, nor are you affected by his sufferings. Self-denial means dealing with yourself in a similar fashion.*" "*In its perfection,*" says St. Basil, "*it implies a renunciation of everything, even of life. Perfecta renunciatio in eo sita est ut de vita sua ne minimum affectus sit, quamvis habeat mortis responsum.*" S. Gregory (32 in Matt.) draws a distinction between detachment from external things and self-denial: "*Minus est abnegare quod habet, valde autem multum est abnegare quod est. Non sufficit ergo nostra relinquere nisi relinquamus et nos.*"

Self-denial, then, is but a means to an end; by setting a man free, it enables him to devote himself to the service of God. The fuller the service, the greater that self-surrender or self-sacrifice has to be. Self-denial may, therefore, be practised in various degrees.

1. There is a degree in which it has to be practised in order to ensure faithfulness to essential duties or to avoid grievous sin. "*Relinquamus nosmet ipsos quales peccando nos fecimus, qui superbus fuit, si humilis factus est seipsum relinquit. Si luxuriosus*

quisque ad continentiam vitam mutavit abnegavit itaque semetipsum." This is the lowest of all; yet for those who are under the influence of any strong passion, it implies an heroic effort, and becomes the source of a high degree of merit. To obey the law of God the intemperate man, the voluptuous man, the hot-tempered, the resentful man has to practise a high order of self-renouncement, which often fails to be appreciated as it ought.

2. The second degree is that which is necessary for the avoidance of venial sin — in itself a higher degree, because it extends to a much larger number of cases, and generally implies greater strictness.

3. The third degree corresponds to the avoidance of the occasions of sin, even where one is not strictly bound to do so. Certain forms of indulgence are known to weaken the power of resistance to temptation, or to deaden the conscience, or to lead to minor faults, and are sacrificed on that account. It is easy to see how much this widens the field of self-denial.

4. Finally there are pleasures ever so harmless in themselves and ever so sweet to the individual, yet he gives them up in view of the higher good of the soul and the greater honor and glory of God.

This is truly and purely religious self-denial. The other degrees are conceivable on rational grounds, and have been practised more or less by the ancient philosophers. Here we enter into the region of faith, and of life seen in the light of God. The

Saints show the way. They were terribly cruel to themselves. They waged war fiercely on their flesh. They denied themselves the most natural and the most harmless enjoyments; they fasted, they flogged themselves; no heartless master ever treated a slave as they treated their frail and fragile bodies. The world witnesses their action, and calls it fanaticism and folly. Many half-enlightened Christians respect it, yet at heart they believe it to be a mistake. But the mistake is all theirs. Behind them the Saints have the unvarying tradition and teaching of the Church, around them the incomparable influence they wield over their contemporaries, and above them the sanction of God himself in the miraculous power with which He gifted them.

“Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord for the love of Him who was crucified for thee.

“Prepare thyself to suffer many adversities in this miserable life, for so it will be with thee wherever thou art.

“Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be his friend and to have part with him.” —

IMIT. ii. 12-10.

XXIV

THROUGH DEATH TO LIFE

"Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet; si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert."

"Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." — JOHN xii. 24.



HAT Our Blessed Lord thus sets before us, is not merely a fact of the material world; it is a type of what is about to happen in Himself, and at the same time the revelation of a general law extending to His followers and to mankind at large, — the law being this, that the highest ends and fullest expansion of life are reached only by sacrifice; often by the sacrifice of life itself.

It was so in His own case. In His secret interview with Nicodemus, He tells how He is to be lifted up like the brazen serpent in the desert, that all who believe in Him may be saved. Later on, speaking to the Jews (John viii. 28), He refers to the time when He shall have been lifted up by

them. On Mount Thabor, where He enjoys a visible anticipation of His glorified humanity, the subject of His discourse with Moses and Elias is His approaching passion: "*Et dicebant excessum ejus quem completurus erat in Jerusalem;*" and after His resurrection He reminds the disciples of Emmaus that it was the divinely appointed plan that He should reach His glory only through His sufferings and death: "*Nonne haec oportuit pati Christum et ita intrare in gloriam suam?*" The indissoluble connection of the two is clearly before His mind when, referring to the grain of wheat, "*The hour is come,*" he says, "*that the Son of Man should be glorified;*" that is, that the glorious work for which He came should be accomplished; but it must be at the cost of His life. *Like the grain of wheat*, He must die to give life to the world; and, recurring once more to His favorite expression, He adds (John v. 32), "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself.*"

Such then was the price of the salvation of mankind, as freely ordained by the divine Wisdom and freely consented to by Our Saviour. But it was also the price at which the apostles were admitted to share in the blessed work. Long before His death He had warned them of this (Matt. x.): "*Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. . . . They will scourge you in their synagogues . . . and you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. . . . Fear ye not them that kill the*

body and are not able to kill the soul." And in His last discourse, He reminds them of it again: "*Remember my words that I said to you: The servant is not greater* (that is, has no claim to be better off) *than his master. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you.*" — JOHN XV. 20. They, too, like the grain of wheat, had to die in order to produce the rich harvest of souls that was to spring from them. And so was it through the early ages of the Church. The blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians, as Tertullian said: "*Sanguis martyrum semen est Christianorum.*" And so will it be to the end of time. In the eyes of civilized man and savage alike, the strongest argument in favor of a doctrine is to be found in the sacrifices made by those who propagate it; the sacrifice of life, if need be, and, in a minor degree, the sacrifice of ease, fortune, country, home. This is the secret of the success of our missionaries abroad, and of the most influential and venerated priests around us.

Indeed, it may be said that sacrifice is the condition of success in every sphere. The explorer, the reformer, the statesman, the soldier, have all to relinquish much of the lower pleasures of existence. Their life is not, and cannot be, a life of ease and enjoyment. They have, to use the Biblical term, "*to die*" to many things, if they would be successful in their respective pursuits. Of nobody is this more true than of the priest. His life can be truly fruitful to himself and to others only on condition

of his dying to the natural life; that is, of voluntarily foregoing many pleasurable things within his reach; at one time, emolument, at another, advancement; here, the enjoyment of family, there, the comforts of an easy life. Only in proportion as he relinquishes these things, to say nothing of those forbidden, does he grow in personal holiness and in public usefulness. “*Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.*”


“*Behold in the cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying; and there is no other way to life but the way of the Holy Cross and of daily mortification.*” —
IMIT. ii. 10.

XXV

THE LOVE OF CHILDREN

"Sinite parvulos venire ad me, et ne prohibueritis eos, talium enim est regnum Dei."

"Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God." —
MARK X. 14.

 HE priest should love all his people. There is no age, no condition of life, no degree of worthiness or unworthiness, which has not its special claims on him. When the pastor of souls considers in succession the various members of his flock, he finds in the individual circumstances of each something that goes directly to his heart. But to none does he feel more sweetly drawn than to children, and to none should he more readily devote his time and labor.

1. He learns to love them from the example of the Divine Master himself. Nothing is more touching in our Lord than His tender regard for these little ones. They instinctively gather around Him. With their parents they follow Him into the desert, and share in the miraculous meal of the loaves and

the fishes. And He, in His divine condescension, welcomes them, caresses them, gives them His blessing. The scene described by St. Mark in his brief, graphic way, shows beautifully how He felt, and doubtless how He was wont to act in their regard: "*And they brought to Him young children that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked those that brought them. Whom when Jesus saw, He was much displeased and saith to them: Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God. . . . And, embracing them and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them.*"

2. What drew thus the heart of Our Lord towards children He Himself is careful to tell us: "*For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.*" Their condition is most like that of the angels, and fittest to appear before God,—fittest also for His kingdom here below, under the law of the Gospel. And this is why the priest, whose business is to build up that kingdom, loves little children. Already and without effort they are what He wishes all to be. Children are naturally without guile, artless, harmless, incapable of doing any serious injury. Their minds and souls are transparent. They are strangers to the passions and defilements of later years, and nearer to the condition of angels than to that of fallen man. They are for a time ignorant of evil, and when, later on, the knowledge of it comes, it only awakens in them at first a sense of horror. And if its taint reaches their souls in any degree, it

remains on the surface and is easily removed, or drops off of itself. The child is naturally humble. He looks up to those around him as stronger and wiser than himself. He turns to them instinctively for guidance and for help, and is docile and obedient in most things without effort. He is trustful, hopeful, little concerned about the future; just what Our Lord taught His followers to be. And this is why the priest turns to children as the purest, the heavenliest part of his flock.

In the child, besides, he sees already the Christian of later years, and watches with delight his earliest impressions, in order to cultivate the seeds of goodness implanted in him by the Creator, to check, and, if possible, to destroy, the budding shoots of evil. No soil is more fertile, more responsive to intelligent cultivation, than the souls of children.

But to be successful in this blessed work much patience is necessary and much kindness. The priest must begin by winning the affections of his children, and nothing is easier. He meets them at every step, on the streets, at Sunday-school, in their homes. They look up to him with awe, as to a mysterious preternatural being, and attach a special value to what comes from him. A little gift, a kind word, a pleasant smile, a simple recognition, is appreciated by them. Children were wont to follow St. Francis de Sales on the streets of Annecy, and into his house or into the Convent of the Visitation, as if drawn by an irresistible

attraction. There is no more pleasing trait in a priest than to be popular with the children, nor are there many more helpful to him in his work. By it he not only reaches and holds the children themselves during the important period of their moral and religious training, but he also reaches the hearts of their parents, for nothing is more welcome to them than what is done for their little ones.

“Hi patrem sequuntur, matrem amant, proximo velle malum nesciunt, curam opum negligunt, non insolescunt, non mentiuntur, dictis credunt, et quod audiunt verum habent. Revertendum est igitur ad simplicitatem puerorum quid eos ea collocat, speciem humilitatis Dominicæ circumferemus.” — S. HILAR, in *Matt.*

XXVI

CHRIST THE COMFORTER

"Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos."

"Come unto me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." — MATT. xi. 28.



IT is to the whole world and to all ages, that this tender invitation went forth from the heart of Our Lord. Those who heard it spoken, thought only of themselves and of the endless pharisaic prescriptions and practices which exhausted their energies, and weighed them down like an unbearable burden. And to them, indeed, and to their troubles did the words of the Master refer immediately. But they meant much more. His appeal and His promise extended to all human suffering and sorrow. The very first time He preached in a synagogue, He took for His text the prophetic words of Isaiah: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to preach good tidings to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that were bruised;"* and he added, *"This day is fulfilled this Scripture;"* that is, I shall

accomplish all that is promised. And ever since, He has kept His promise with all those who have turned to Him in their trials.

What He promised was not the removal of suffering, for suffering is a divinely appointed discipline in this world, correcting, warning, calling back to God those who forget Him, as nothing else can do. But often there is too much of it for human weakness to endure, and then its beneficent effects are liable to be lost, and manifold evils to take their place. There are sorrows that crush the soul, or waste all her vitality; acute bodily suffering, chronic illness, humiliation, loss of position or fortune, repeated disappointment, and failure. Unsustained by faith the soul sinks under them, or settles down in a condition of abject misery. But the Christian hears the loving voice of the Saviour calling him: "*Come and I will refresh you.*"

He comes, and, first of all, he learns from his Divine Master that it is good for him to suffer: "*Beati qui lugent;*" — that his trials are meant to wean his affections from earth, and turn them heavenward; that the pain he endures is of short duration, and the reward without end; that if he be a sinner, the present is the best time to make atonement, and that humble submission is always the most welcome homage to God.

And then Christ spreads out before him His own life so full of privation and sorrow. He shows Him, as He did to St. Thomas, the wounds in His hands

and His feet ; He allows him to see into the depths of His sacred passion ; He leads him to the garden of His agony, to the pillar at which He was scourged, to the cross of Calvary upon which He died ; and then He gently asks him whether he is not ready to bear something in return for His sake. Hard-hearted indeed would he be, and unworthy the name of Christian, if he declined to do so.

While Christ by His example and by His love thus encourages His poor child, He infuses the charm of divine grace into his afflicted soul, and imparts the courage to take up afresh his cross and to bear it. Thus He dealt with St. Paul, leaving him to bear to the end that "*sting of the flesh*" from which he prayed so hard to be delivered, but assuring him of a grace that would enable him to support it : "*Sufficit tibi gratia mea.*" — 2. COR. xii. 9.

Here is the secret of that mysterious joy which filled the souls of the Saints of all ages in the midst of their trials, and which so perplexed the unspiritual who beheld them. "*Crucem vident,*" says St. Bernard, "*unctionem non vident.*" This is the source of that stream of happiness, flowing down through Christian ages, in which countless weary souls have slaked their thirst. "*Come,*" said Our Lord to each one in turn, "*come to me, and you shall find rest to your souls.*" "*Requiem invenietis animabus vestris.*" And they found it : rest and peace of intellect concerning the great problems of life, while all was darkness and confusion around them ; peace of

soul in the midst of trials, patience in sufferings, hope in the gloomiest hours, and, for those who came nearest to Christ, "*joy in tribulation*;" and in presence of death itself, nothing but a cry of fearless defiance: "*O Death, where is thy victory? O Death where is thy sting?*"

The priest, too, has labor to face, often uncongenial and tedious; he has burdens to bear, sometimes too heavy for his shoulders. But, if he only listens, he, too, will hear the voice of Christ calling him. From the crucifix, from the tabernacle, the sweet words will come forth, and go straight to his heart:

"Come, O my son, come to Me; thy mind is darkened; I will give it back its wonted light: thy heart is sad and sinking; I will cheer and brighten it; thou art weak, I will strengthen thee; thou meetest coldness, unkindness, neglect, censure, at the hands of thy fellow-men. Come to Me, and in the embrace of My love all will be forgotten."

"Laborantes ad refectiorem invitat, ad requiem provocat oneratos; non tamen onus subtrahit aut laborem, magis autem onere alio, alio labore commutat; sed onere levi, suavi jugo, in quibus requies aut refectio, etsi minus appareat, tamen inveniatur." — S. BERN., *Serm. XV. in Psalm.*

XXVII

THE PRIEST A COMFORTER

"Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos."

"Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. — MATT. xxi. 28.



HE priest is here below the representative of Christ. He continues the work of the Saviour among men, and therefore he may borrow without presumption the words of his Master, and apply them to himself. In a true sense he, too, can say to his fellow-men, *"Come to me."*

The occasion to do this blessed work is never missing; for though much better and happier than when Christ came, the world is still full of darkness and of wickedness, of suffering and of sorrow. "The primeval curse is still visible on the human race: *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."* The active energies of the vast majority of men are spent, like those of animals, in seeking food; they keep alive only at the cost of unceasing toil. Even those who escape the pressure of physical wants, are liable to

worse, — sickness in one or other of its innumerable shapes, robbing existence of all its joy ; the loss of fortune ; poverty, with all the privations and embarrassments it entails ; severance by death, or by estrangement of affection, of the closest and dearest ties ; or again, sorrow, or failure, or disgrace, lighting on others dearer than self. Or it may be the agony of religious doubt, or the dark void of unbelief, or the remorse and the shame of sin. How few escape entirely these countless forms of evil ! How many are weighed down by them, and instinctively look around them for relief !

To all these the priest is sent ; all day long he cries to them : “ *Come to me and I will refresh you.*” For every evil he has a remedy. To those who have never known the blessing of faith, or in whom its beneficent light has been obscured by doubt, and who grope like the blind to find an issue, or who, having tried in vain, settle down disheartened and despairing, “ *in darkness and in the shadow of death,*” the priest offers the sweet, winning radiance of the Gospel — courage, contentment, hopefulness, joy. From the guilty heart he removes the crushing weight of sin. The relief, the comfort, the strength, he imparts to penitent souls every day in the tribunal of penance, should be enough to make all men bless him.

But not merely for spiritual needs do men come to him. He is their resource and their refuge in all their trials. The poor, the sick, the afflicted,

instinctively turn to him. From him they expect what nobody else can or will do for them. Nor do they hope in vain. Compassion is easy to him, for he is no stranger himself to the miseries of life. "*He is taken,*" says St. Paul (HEB. V. 1.), "*from among men and ordained for men . . . who can have compassion on them, because he himself is also compassed with infirmity.*" And then daily contact with the heart of his Master has enlarged his heart, and filled it with an inexhaustible treasure of pity. The relief found in sympathy, by those who suffer, is simply incalculable; but the priest does more than sympathize with them: he tries to relieve them. His pity is active, because his love is sincere. The selfish man tries to forget the needs and sufferings of his fellow-men; or he hardens himself against them by some scientific theory, or he attempts to buy himself off by some transient beneficence. Not so the true priest. He is ever mindful of those who suffer, ever anxious to help them. His love makes him resourceful. Often he succeeds in accomplishing what nobody else could or would do.

And even when he has thus made the burden endurable, his heavenly work is not ended. He still possesses the secret of lightening the weight of what remains. Behind what cannot be removed, he reveals the hidden hand of God dealing out what is so unwelcome to nature, not in anger, but in love. "*Because thou wast acceptable to God,*" said the Archangel to Tobias, "*it was necessary that temptation*

(i.e. suffering) *should prove thee.*" And thus the trials of life come to be looked upon as blessings in disguise, not only to be borne patiently, but to be readily accepted, and positively welcomed.

Truly the priest is the great comforter of man in his misery, dispensing relief, brightness, hope, joyful submission, to all who come under his influence. But only the true priest can do such things — the man of faith, of charity, of unselfish devotion, the man who loses himself in the service of others. The intelligent man, the active man, the good-natured man, can do something for them; the man of God alone can do all.

"Wherefore do thou, O man of God, pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness." — 1 TIM. VI. 2.

"*Sit rector singulis compassione proximus, præ cunctis contemplatione suspensus, ut et per pietatis viscera in se cæterorum-infirmitatem transferat, et per speculationis altitudinem seipsum quoque invisibilia appetendo transcendat, ne aut alta petens proximorum infirma despicat aut infirmis proximorum congruens appetere alta derelinquat.*" — S. GREG., *Pastoral*. I. v.

XXVIII

THE RELIGIOUS MAN

"Legem pone mihi, Domine, viam justificationum tuarum, et exquiram eam semper. Da mihi intellectum et scrutabor legem tuam, et custodiam illam in toto corde meo." — Ps. cxviii.

"Set before me for a law the way of thy justification, O Lord, and I will always seek after it. Give me understanding and I will search thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart."



THE law by which men's actions are practically guided, depends upon what is uppermost in their minds and deepest in their hearts. With the great majority, the ruling principle, in one shape or another, is self-interest. Their great aim in life is pleasure, or position, or power, or wealth which may place any or all of the others within their reach.

With a certain number it is something incomparably higher and greater than self; it is moral goodness. To avoid what is wrong or unworthy, because of its wickedness or unworthiness; to cultivate virtue for its own sake; to do the right thing chiefly because

it is right ; to sacrifice all else when necessary to honor and to duty,—such is the endeavor of many good men of past and present times.

Finally, there are those who view their lives, and aim at regulating them, principally in the light of their relations with God. To recognize His claims upon them, to serve Him, to obey His will in every particular, is their great concern.

To follow the first of these principles, makes the worldly man. To obey the second, makes the virtuous man. To be guided by the third, makes the religious man.

The distinctive character, therefore, of the religious man is that, not only in theory, but in practice, his life is built on, and regulated by, the thought of God. All Christians know that God is ever present to them ; that it is His hand that sustains them in existence ; that His guiding action extends to whatever may happen them ; that they owe Him the homage of all they have and are, and that to Him they will have to answer for every particular of their lives. All know it, but the religious man realizes it, and aims at accommodating his life to such a conception. This is what distinguishes him from all others. In what he does, the worldly man looks to his interest, the conscientious man to the laws of duty, but the religious man looks to the will of God. Like Abraham, he walks in the divine presence ; he remembers God, he seeks God, he sees God everywhere. The visible world is to him a constant revelation of the

Divine attributes. In the events of public life, where others admit of nothing but the play of human passions, or the forces of nature, the religious man recognizes, though he may not always be able to show, a guiding providence; and in all that happens to himself, be it good or evil, he acknowledges humbly, like Job, the hidden hand of God.

This is preëminently a Christian type of virtue. It contains, or it leads to, what is most distinctive in the Gospel. There is something particularly humble and subdued in the religious man. Self-restraint is natural to him, as is also patience and gentleness with others. He is reverent and recollected in his devotions, in his contact with sacred places and things. He is instinctively a man of prayer. Living with God, he turns to Him on all occasions, leans upon Him; he mingles prayer with his most ordinary actions.

How fitting is such a spirit and such a form of life in priests! The Council of Trent looks for it in them: "*nihil nisi grave, moderatum ac RELIGIONE PLENUM præ se ferant.*" The people look for it, too, not only at the altar and in the sacred functions where its absence would shock them, but in the tone, the manner, and language of the priest in ordinary life. Everywhere he is expected to be not only a good man, a kind man, a well-bred man, but also a religious man, a man of God.


"Tu autem o homo Dei!"

XXIX

HOLINESS AND HELPFULNESS

"Pro eis ego sanctifico meipsum."

"For them do I sanctify myself." — JOHN xvii. 19.

 HE sanctification of which Our Lord speaks could not mean for Him what it commonly means when applied to men. In men there is always room for growth in holiness; in Christ there was none. Not only in His divinity was He perfectly and essentially holy, but also in His humanity from the first hour in which it was hypostatically united to a divine person. But in Sacred Writ, in which the word "*sanctification*" is very frequently met, it almost invariably has the meaning of consecration to God, active or passive. In this sense it is said that the Lord sanctified the seventh day, and that the temple, the altar, the vessels used in the sacrifice, and many things besides, were sanctified, that is, withdrawn from ordinary uses and consecrated to God. In the same sense Christ tells us (JOHN x. 36) that He himself was sanctified and sent by His Father, that is, consecrated as a victim for the salvation of man-

kind. But now, inasmuch as He freely accepts the merciful decree, and resolves to carry it out even to the laying down of His life on Calvary, He may say, in all truth, that He "*sanctifies* (i.e. devotes) *himself*," and furthermore, that He sanctifies himself "*for them*," for his disciples, for all those whom He came to save, "*that they may be sanctified in truth*;" that is, that in Him and through Him they may be offered and consecrated to God.

What Christ did for mankind at large, the priest has to do for his people. He has to remember, first of all, that it is for them, not for himself, he has been chosen, consecrated, anointed, and sent. "*For every high priest*, says St. Paul (HEB. V. 1.), "*taken from among men, is ordained for men*." Next, after having been thus sanctified, i.e. devoted, consecrated, to the good of others by his very ordination, he responds to the divine action by giving himself wholly and unceasingly to the same purpose. He is pure to make others pure; he is separated from the world to make others unworldly. As Christ takes those He has chosen, and presents them with Himself to God as a single offering, so the priest identifies himself with his flock, bearing them in his hands, so to speak, every time he appears before God. This he does ostensibly and solemnly as often as they gather around him at the holy sacrifice. This he repeats each time he recites the breviary. His voice is not merely his own; it is also that of his

people united with him in a common act of self-consecration. Every sacrament he confers, every priestly duty he performs, means the same thing, and has the same purpose, — to bring his people ever nearer to God; and nearness to God is sanctification itself.

But in another and more familiar sense of the word, the priest should take for his motto the saying of the Master: "*For them do I sanctify myself.*" The priest has, indeed, many reasons to strive for holiness. His place is in the sanctuary, near to God. His life is spent amid holy things. At the altar he is as one with Christ himself; in fact, every thing he says and does in the performance of his sacred duties, calls him back to the law of holiness; and he is safe only if he aspires constantly to that higher life, at the summit of which stand the saints. If he aims merely at what is necessary, he misses it and is lost.

In the same sense he sanctifies himself for the sake of his flock. He is their mediator, and therefore he must hold himself as near as possible to the Throne of Mercy. Evidently the more closely he is united to God, the more efficacious his prayer is, and the more abundant the blessings poured down upon those for whom he prays. And the same is true of his other functions. The word of God is deserving of attention and reverence, whoever preaches it; but what additional weight is added to it by the holy life of the preacher! The sacraments he administers are independent in their essence of his

personal qualities; yet how great is the share of these in the final result! Of all the qualities which may be found in a priest, nothing so much as exceptional holiness draws to him those who need his help. They gather eagerly around the confessional where he sits, around the pulpit where he preaches, around the altar where he offers the Divine Victim. To the pious priest only, will those appeal who aspire to the higher life. For them in a most special manner "*he sanctifies himself*," because only on that condition can he be really helpful to them. Devoid of piety himself, he would ill understand them, and still less care to help them in a practical, continuous, earnest way; and so, for their sakes, as well as for his own, he studies the ways of divine grace; he meditates, he prays, he practises the virtues to which he is striving to initiate others; he walks before them in the narrow path which leads directly to God.

"*Pro eis ego sanctifico meipsum ut sint et ipsi sanctificati in veritate.*"

"*Ille modis omnibus ad sacerdotium evehi debet qui cunctis carnis passionibus moriens jam spiritaliter vivit; qui ad aliena cupiendā non ducitur, sed propria largitur; qui sic studet vivere ut proximorum corda arentia doctrinæ valeat fluentis irrigare. Si homo apud hominem de quo minimē præsūmit fieri intercessor erubescit, qua mente apud Deum intercessionis locum pro populo arripit qui familiarem se ejus gratiæ esse per vitæ meritum nescit?*" — S. GREG., *Past.* I. 10.

XXX

THE PRIEST A SOLDIER

"Labora sicut bonus miles Christi Jesu."

"Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." —

2 TIM. ii. 3.



HE priest is more than once compared by St. Paul to a soldier; and rightly, for the more of the soldier there is in him, the better priest he is.

At first sight, nothing seems more opposed than the two callings, but a closer examination reveals the fact that several of their leading features are the same. The same general conditions of life are found in both, and the same qualities are required.

1. The priest, like the soldier, once engaged is no longer free; he is no longer at liberty to forsake his profession, and to turn to any of the pursuits of life which were previously open to him. He cannot even combine them, to any extent, with the duties he has assumed. "*No man*," says St. Paul (*ibid*), *being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular business.*" That is, he has no right to do so. The soldier has ceased to belong to himself. His very

life is not his own. The Roman soldier that St. Paul had in mind was separated from family, kindred, home, country; indeed, everywhere the soldier's life is a life of detachment. In active warfare he has to hold himself always in readiness; at any time he may be called upon to face certain death. And therefore he is best without a family. If he has left behind him persons tenderly loved, it is not good that he should give them much thought; such memories would unman him. In a word, the life of a soldier in active service is a life of detachment, of self-devotion; a ready gift of his energies, and, if need be, of his life, to the service of his country.

What else is the life of a priest, if he be true to his calling? His time, his energies, his influence, all his gifts, belong to the great purpose for which he became a priest. Like St. Paul, he is ready to give his very life for it: "*I most gladly will spend, and be spent myself, for your souls.*" — 2 COR. xii. 15.

2. The qualities of the soldier are no less necessary in the priest, — courage, endurance, discipline. The true soldier is the type of *courage*. He is fearless in presence of danger, or, if fear is awakened in him, he does not yield to it, else he would be branded as a coward. But his courage is only occasionally appealed to, whereas his *power of endurance* is taxed at every hour. Long marches, scanty provisions, excessive heat or cold, lack of shelter, sickness, — these are what try the soldier much more than facing the enemy. This is why St. Paul does not

say: "*Have courage; be brave;*" but "*suffer hardship,*" for such is the meaning of the Greek term, *κακοπάθησον*, rendered in the Vulgate by the word *labora*. Last of all, but not least, *discipline*. In the Roman army discipline was of the strictest kind, and the oath of obedience (*sacramentum*) was looked upon as the most sacred of all. In man, as in nature, only disciplined power is useful. Uncontrolled, it wastes itself, and often proves destructive.

Courage, too, is a requirement of the priesthood; physical courage sometimes, moral courage always. To be faithful to duty, at any cost; to live up to his convictions whatever others may say; to speak out for the right, to censure and to oppose what is wrong; to carry out necessary but unpopular measures; to face the risk of being misunderstood or blamed, or to forfeit certain advantages sooner than relinquish a useful purpose,—all this is necessary in the priest, and it means in all cases true moral courage.

The power of endurance is not less necessary. The life of a priest, if he strives to meet all the requirements of his position, is generally a trying one. His mission may be what is called a hard one. The demands upon his physical strength may be as much as he can bear. His patience is tried in numberless ways. Among those with whom he is placed in contact, there are the thoughtless, the unreasonable, the obstinate, the deceitful, the selfish, the ungrateful; he has to bear with all, and

strive by dint of gentleness and forbearance to win them to Christ.

Finally, his life has to be one of order, of rule, of discipline. In many things he is left to his own initiative; but in a still larger number he is under rule,—the rule of the Gospel and the rules of the Church. His action as a priest is individual in one sense, in another it is collective, that is, associated with the action of the Church herself and of her representatives. In both it is equally withdrawn from caprice and subject to law.

“It is the soldier’s pride to fight for his king; what an honor to be the soldier of Christ! But if campaigning means endurance, he who endureth not is no soldier.” — CHRYS. in 2 Tim.

XXXI

THE SAVING POWER OF THE PRIEST

"Vos estis sal terræ."

"You are the salt of the earth." — MATT. V. 13.



SALT is used everywhere for two chief purposes, — to give savor to food, and to preserve it from corruption. Under this latter aspect it is introduced by Our Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount. Two things are implied in His words: "*You are the salt of the earth*," (a) that the world, that is mankind, is prone to corruption; and (b) that those whom He addresses, that is, His followers, and, in an especial manner His apostles, are destined to counteract that evil tendency, and preserve the world from debasement and ultimate ruin.

That in human nature, and in whatever proceeds from it, there is a constant tendency to corruption, is a fact which nobody is tempted to question. Not mere decay or loss of power and vitality, but positive corruption; that is, a substitution of what is evil for what is good. In every individual there is

a manifold propensity to wickedness which has to be kept under severe discipline. In human society, principles, ideals, habits, tend of themselves to degenerate; nor does the Church herself, because of the human elements which enter into her constitution, escape from the common law. She has passed through periods of deep debasement; and, even when at her best, she is conscious of carrying within her the germs of infection which, if allowed to develop, would prove fatal to her.

There are many forces at work to counteract this tendency to evil wherever found. There is the enlightened self-interest of the individual and of the community; there is public opinion; there is the moral sense and the voice of conscience in every human soul. Now, all these are good and useful, and should be welcomed. But whether separate or united, they have always proved lamentably insufficient; since, in spite of them, all the human race had gone from bad to worse up to the coming of Christ, and has continued to do so wherever He is not known. His Gospel only and its blessed influence, His Church and her ministrations, have stayed the world in its downward course; and only they can continue to save it from intellectual, moral, and social ruin.

This heavenly work of preservation is shared in by all God's faithful children. By their principles and by their actions they are a public, perpetual, effective protest against the false doctrines and the

wicked ways of the world. And that this is part of their calling, — that they, too, are meant to be “*the salt of the earth*,” — is a truth of which they should be frequently reminded.

But the saying of Our Lord, “*You are the salt of the earth*,” was obviously meant, above all, for His apostles and their successors in the ministry of the New Law. It is the special vocation of every priest to be the preserver and guardian of what is most precious in man, — integrity of principle, and purity of conscience. He is the divinely appointed protector of souls at every period of life, — in childhood, in youth, in manhood and womanhood, in old age. His first concern is to preserve from all taint of evil the individual souls committed to his care. But his solicitude goes far beyond. It embraces the whole community with which he is connected, the parish, the diocese, the country at large. He labors by his private influence and by his public action to counteract the tendency to dishonesty, to deceit, to the unscrupulous pursuit of gain so universally prevalent, and to maintain in every sphere the principles of private integrity, of social propriety, and of sincere devotion to the public good.

But the priest can do much more. The power is given him not only to preserve but to purify. What salt cannot effect on tainted meats, he can effect on tainted souls. He can destroy the work of corruption, and restore them to their original integrity.

All this he is sent among men to do day after day,

to the end of his life. But he can do it only on one condition, — that he himself retain within him the consecrating and purifying principles of truth and goodness. For if he keep them not, he is powerless to impart them; and, short of a Divine interposition, he cannot, once he has lost them, ever recover them himself. Thus he becomes worthless as a priest, worthless as a man. Such is the solemn warning given by Our Lord Himself: "*But if the salt lose its savour wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men.*"

Such is the unhappy lot of a priest who has lost, and is known to have lost, the integrity of faith or of life in a measure which unfits him for his work. There is no place for him in the priesthood, and there is no place for him in the world. He becomes an outcast to the Church and to his fellow-men, almost as unfit for secular as for clerical duties, compelled to hide his character as his only chance of being tolerated, and, whenever discovered, sure to be despised, shunned, and "*trodden on by men.*" "*Ad nihilum valet ultra nisi ut conculcetur ab hominibus.*"


"*Si sal sumus, condire mentes fidelium debemus. Quasi inter bruta animalia petra salis debet esse sacerdos in populis ut quisque sacerdoti jungitur quasi e salis petra æternæ vitæ sapore condiatur.*" — ST. GREG., *Hom. xvii.*

XXXII

YOUNG PRIESTS

"Nemo adolescentiam tuam contemnat."

"Let no man despise thy youth." — I. TIM. iv. 12.

 HERE are duties of the priest to which early manhood is by no means unsuited : the religious instruction of children, for example, and their moral and spiritual training ; or, again, the bearing of divine truth to distant lands, and, in general, what entails most hardship, and demands most power of physical endurance, in the missionary life. Yet it must be admitted that, taken as a whole, the functions of the priesthood call for ripeness of years. In the pulpit the priest has not only to convey to his hearers a correct notion of the Christian doctrine, a thing he may do equally well at any age, but also to apply the law of duty to the various circumstances and conditions of life, to advise, to caution, to reprove, to condemn ; all of which imply maturity, weight of authority, such as ordinarily comes with years. In the tribunal of penance he has to listen to disclosures of great delicacy ; to elicit them, when necessary, from all, regardless of

condition or age or sex. It is his privilege to enter into the deepest secrets of souls. Like the family physician, or the family lawyer, he is intrusted with matters of which all the rest of the world remains in ignorance. He sits as a judge, deciding questions in which the interests, nay, the abiding happiness of his penitent, and, indirectly, the happiness of others, may be involved. He has to guide through intricate paths, and show how to face the most critical emergencies.

All this naturally demands experience, refined wisdom ; and hence it is that where priests abound, the age at which they are admitted to hear confessions (except those of children) comes much later than the canonical age for the priesthood. In certain religious societies ordination itself is delayed, because the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries is something so solemn that it seems incongruous to intrust it to one barely emerging from youth into manhood. It is as old, not as young, that the popular imagination pictures to itself the priest of God ; and poets and painters, who are wont to represent things in their ideal forms, invariably portray him as advanced in years.

There is, therefore, a real absence of harmony, in the young priest, between the number of his years and the nature of his principal duties, and a consequent peril of what S. Paul apprehended in the case of Timothy : a lack of trust and of reverence on the part of the faithful. “ *Nemo adolescentiam tuam*

contemnat." And yet the Church, yielding to the practical requirements of her work, has always admitted, and will doubtless continue to admit, young men to the character and to all the functions of the sacred office. But then she knows that years are not everything; that there may be a dignified youth, as there may be a silly old age; and that a grace of a divine vocation may supply, before the time, what is commonly the fruit of years.

What may deprive a young priest of the reverence and trust of the faithful? The faults of boyhood: levity, thoughtlessness, immaturity, precipitancy, an inordinate love of sports and games, a lack of repose.

What makes a young priest respected? Seriousness of manner, maturity of thought, earnestness of purpose, steadiness in carrying out all that appertains to duty; also, learning, piety, enlightened zeal, self-respect, a sense of authority tempered by modesty: "*auctoritas modesta*," as the Pontifical says in the rite of ordination; finally, the religious spirit, that is, the spirit of reverence imparting a tone of thoughtfulness and deliberation to the whole man. Each of these helps to dispel the unfavorable impression which might attach to the youthful priest, and therefore it becomes his duty to cultivate them sedulously in the early years of his ministry. To the buoyancy and enthusiasm of youth, which he should strive to retain, he has to add the gravity, the dignity, the repose, of old age: "*cujus probata*

vita senectus sit." And thus the number of his years will be lost to sight, and the faithful will see, listen to, and love in him the man of God.

Vide quomodo oporteat sacerdotem imperare et cum auctoritate loqui. Contemptibilis est juventus ex praejudicata opinione ; ideo dicit Apostolus : " Nemo adolescentiam tuam contemnat." Oportet enim doctorem non esse contemptui. In rebus quae ad se solum spectant, contemnatur et id ferat ; in iis vero quae ad alios spectant, non item. Hic non modestia opus est sed auctoritate, ne id gregi noceat. — CHRYSOST. in 1 Tim., Hom. xiii.

XXXIII

CARRYING THE CROSS

"Si quis vult post me venire, abneget seipsum, tollat crucem suam et sequatur me."

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." — MATT. xvi. 24.



THE original sense of these words has more or less disappeared in the subsequent extension given them, and in their moral applications. They were spoken by Our Lord a short time before His passion and death, when He had begun to acquaint His followers explicitly with what awaited Him in Jerusalem: "*From that time,*" says St. Matthew in this same place (xvi. 21), "*Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things . . . and be put to death.*" "*And He spoke the word openly,*" adds St. Mark. St. Peter, shocked by such a prospect, makes bold to expostulate with Him privately, and exclaims: "*God forbid that any such thing should happen Thee.*" Whereupon Christ rebukes him for his worldly thoughts. Far from being an obstacle, the sufferings and death

of his Master will be the salvation and life of the world, and even the source of His own glory, as, later on, He told the disciples of Emmaus: "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter His glory?*" — LUKE XXIV. 26.

And this is a law for all.

To suffer and to die is as nothing compared with eternal happiness, and whoever is not prepared to make the sacrifice is unfit to receive the reward. This Our Lord resolved to proclaim aloud and to make known to all. So, "*calling the multitude together,*" says St. Mark, "*with his disciples, He said to them: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*" That is: "I am about to die a cruel and ignominious death, and those who claim to belong to Me have to be prepared to meet the same fate; some as a reality, the others as a possibility, which they must be disposed to accept at any time, sooner than cease to be loyal to me. They may have to choose between the present life and the future. To save the one may mean to sacrifice the other." In that case "*whoever shall save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it.*"

This supremacy over all else of faith, of the Gospel, of the new life, of the kingdom of God, of Christ Himself as the concrete embodiment of it all, Jesus had already proclaimed again and again, as when He spoke of the "*pearl of great price,*" to purchase which the merchant parts with all he has; or, again, of the

closest bonds of nature to be broken for His sake : “ *He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me.* ” — MATT. x. 37 : to which He adds : “ *He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it,* ” thus showing the sense in which His cross is referred to. In St. Luke (ix. 23) it is spoken of as having to be borne daily : “ *tollat crucem suam quotidie* ; but this, inapplicable to actual death, is perfectly intelligible as understood of an abiding readiness to die for the cause of Christ. Hence the conclusion of Maldonatus (in chap. x. Matt.) : “ *Tollere crucem suam nihil aliud est quam paratum esse pro Christo non quoquo modo mori, sed etiam crucifigi, sicut Petrus dixit ‘ Domine, tecum paratus sum et in carcerem et in mortem ire,’* ” and, naming St. Chrysostom and several others who understand it of that cross, “ *qua mundo mortui esse debemus,* ” he says, “ *magis moralis est quam litteralis.* ”

This “ *moral sense* ” has, it must be confessed, been much more dwelt upon in the church than the literal, and that almost from the beginning. The cross of Christ was looked upon as the symbol of His sufferings, and to bear one’s cross came to signify to suffer for Him and with Him. Thus, instead of a mere disposition to face any sacrifice, even death, rather than be unfaithful to Christ, the bearing of the cross was made to signify a daily

practice of religious devotion recommended to, and in some measure expected of, all true Christians.

In describing the manner of performing this duty, the Fathers follow freely their personal inspirations. "*Tollit crucem suam*," says St. Jerome, "*qui mundo crucifigitur*." "*Duobus modis*," says St. Gregory, "*crux tollitur cum aut per abstinentiam afficitur corpus, aut per compassionem proximi affligitur animus*;" and he gives St. Paul as an example of both, "*castigo corpus meum . . . quis infirmatur et ego non infirmor*." Indeed, bearing the cross came gradually, with spiritual writers, to signify every kind of suffering entailed by Christian duty, or assumed in a Christian spirit.

In keeping with this view, we may distinguish three kinds of crosses, according as they are borne by necessity, or by duty, or by the free choice of the bearer.

1. There are *unavoidable crosses*, i.e., privations, sufferings, trials, which we cannot escape even if we would. We have to bear them *submissively*, because they come from God; *humbly*, because we deserve them; *cheerfully*, because they are blessings in disguise, and help to bring us nearer to God and liken us to Christ.

2. There are *obligatory crosses* which it is in our power to shake off our shoulders, but conscience forbids; unwelcome duties which we are bound to perform, pleasures inviting but unlawful. Such crosses we have to accept loyally, and bear them bravely and perseveringly.

3. There are *voluntary crosses*, which neither outward necessity nor the inward voice of conscience imposes, but which we know to be welcome to our Divine Master; and these we take up lovingly as a free homage offered to Him to whom we would gladly give the whole world and what it contains if we owned it. To these correspond the great sacrifices and austerities of the saints, — deeds of love offered with joy, which all Christians should look up to with sincere admiration, and strive, at least in some measure, to imitate.

“To bear the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it under subjection; to fly honors, to love to suffer insults, to despise one’s self and wish to be despised; to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world; — all this is not according to man’s natural inclination.”

“Set thyself then like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of Thy Lord for the love of Him who was crucified for thee.” — IMIT. ii. 12.

XXXIV

PIETY

“Exerce teipsum ad pietatem.”

“Exercise thyself unto godliness.”— I TIM. iv. 7.



THE word “*piety*” (*pietas*, εὐσέβεια), is susceptible of many meanings. With the ancient Greeks and Romans, it signified primarily the love of parents and of country. From earthly objects, this disposition to reverence and to active service naturally extended itself to God, the original source of all blessings and benefits, and became a religious homage, as St. Thomas explains (2.2. q ci. a 3): “*ea quæ sunt creaturarum per quamdam super excellentiam et causalitatem transferuntur in Deum; unde per excellentiam pietas cultus Dei nominatur.*” Thus understood, piety is the same as what in modern language we call the religious feeling; it is what the schoolmen would call a function, if not the substance of the virtue of Religion. In this sense we find it used in the Old, and still more frequently in the New Testament. In the language of St. Francis de Sales, and of other spiritual writers, the word *devotion* was meant to express the same thing.

By piety, therefore, we understand a disposition of the soul drawing it to do homage to God, and to busy itself with what is directly meant to honor Him. But the principle from which this disposition proceeds may be different. In some it is mainly a sense of duty or propriety, or a view of the benefits accruing to those who, unsustained by any sensible pleasure or enjoyment in the practices themselves, are nevertheless faithful to them; while in others the spontaneous attraction is such as to render all other motives unnecessary. The distinction, indeed, is not peculiar to piety; it applies to all the Christian virtues, even to charity itself. In all there is a rational side, dependent on the will; and an emotional side, dependent on the feelings. Some are moved chiefly by the former, others by the latter. In popular language the former are said to be religious, the latter pious. The truth is, in the Christian soul both elements are present, only in different proportions.

The truly pious soul has her characteristic features. She loves prayer; she is assiduous in the practices of devotion, such as meditation, assistance at the Holy Sacrifice, frequent communion, and the like. She has a taste for spiritual books, and enjoys the Lives of the Saints. She is instinctively led to devotion towards them, and in a most special manner to devotion towards the Blessed Mother of God. She loves to visit and to adorn their shrines, and still more the Altar and the tabernacle.

Piety as proceeding from the will is a virtue ; as a spontaneous impulse it is a gift,— a gift of nature in some, in others a gift of grace.

There are those who are naturally pious ; that is, whose physical temperament or psychological structure leads them, almost without effort or guidance, to the above-mentioned practices. Others are pious because God has made them so, supplying by His grace what is necessary to turn their affections heavenwards, and make them instinctively delight in holy things.

From whatever source piety comes, be it nature, or grace, or both, as usually happens, it should be assiduously cultivated and its promptings gladly welcomed :

First, because it is a great help, as is evident, to faithfulness in the service of God. We are weak, and should readily lay hold of whatever facilitates the performance of any of our obligations. Now, just as the natural affection of children for their parents makes the performance of their filial duties easy and pleasant, so piety sweetens the service of God. Piety is in reality a form of love, and love is the greatest sustaining power of all (IMIT. iii. 5).

Next, because it gives ease and gracefulness to our worship,— an important circumstance for those with whom we live. Piety edifies in proportion as it is spontaneous. It is attractive chiefly by the glow of cheerfulness and brightness that surrounds it.

Finally, piety should be cultivated because it imparts a generous impulse to the soul, and makes her capable of much more than she could attain to without it. Virtue, when alone, may advance with firm step, but piety gives it wings.

By none should piety be more cultivated and cherished than by the priest. Nothing is more in keeping with his character and with his duties. Nobody comes so near to God; nobody should so much enjoy His presence and His service. The priest lives in the midst of holy things; he knows their value; it is only natural that he should love them more than others. That he does so is taken for granted by the faithful; to find him deficient in that point would be disappointing and disedifying. Besides, he has to exhort, to train souls to piety, so far as they are capable of it: how can he do so if his own soul is empty?

*“ O how the thought of God attracts,
And draws the heart from earth,
And sickens it of passing shows,
And dissipating mirth ! ”*

*“ The perfect way is hard to flesh ;
It is not hard to love ;
If thou wert sick for want of God,
How quickly wouldst thou move ! ”*

FABER.

XXXV

PREACHING

"Prædica Verbum."

"I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke, with all patience and doctrine." — 2 TIM. iv. 1, 2.



HIS is one of the parting recommendations of St. Paul to his beloved disciple Timothy. *"The time of my dissolution is at hand,"* he says. *"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith;"* and now that he is about to depart, he would have Timothy take up the burden, continue the work, and pursue it with something of the untiring ardor with which he himself was filled during the whole course of his apostolate. The terms he employs vividly recall his own manner of work. They proclaim at the same time what the minister of the Gospel has to aim at in every age.

Preaching is one of the fundamental duties of the priest in charge of souls. It is by his familiar catechetical teaching that children are trained in the elements of the faith and of the Christian life. It is

by his instructions of Sundays and holy days that the religious knowledge thus acquired is kept up and spread among the vast majority of his people. Books have superseded oral teaching in most forms of knowledge, but not in the knowledge of religion and duty. The people continue to get it almost entirely through the instructions and exhortations of their priests.

The universal practice of reading has by no means destroyed the power of the spoken word. No multiplication of books or magazines or daily papers, can ever supersede the human voice. People are always ready to lay down newspaper or book, to go and listen to a man who is at all worth hearing. It may be that they can endure less dulness or dreariness or repetition than in former times; but at no time has the utterance of the living truth by the living man been more powerful and more welcome than at the present day. Here, then, is a force of incalculable energy placed in the hands of priests, of which a strict account will be demanded at the judgment seat of God. The question for each one will be, not whether he has turned to any purpose the power imparted to him; but whether he has done so as fully, as earnestly, as constantly, as carefully as he should. A lawyer is not merely expected to do *something* for his clients, or a physician for his patients; they are expected to do the *best in their power*. If they fail to do so, they are considered equally lacking in honor and in honesty.

One cannot see why a priest should be judged by a different standard.

To talk merely ; — to say something ; — to fill up the time, is easy enough, and only too many think it good enough for their hearers, but the hearers do not agree with them.

To get off sermons ready made is not so bad, because after all there is a selection, a purpose, and an effort. But such discourses as they stand are seldom adapted to the needs of an audience different from that for which they were originally meant. Sermons are like clothes : to fit well they have to be made to measure.

In reality most priests have in themselves all that is necessary to preach well. They know the doctrines of the faith ; they know how to accommodate them to ordinary minds ; they know the duties of their people, and are able to explain them in detail ; they know the difficulties with which they have to contend, the temptations which beset them, the defeats they suffer, and the victories they win. They are in daily, hourly contact with them, looking down into their very souls, and watching there the endless struggle between fallen nature and divine grace. What need is there of anything more to give freshness, originality, life, to what they say ?

But this is so only on condition that enough is done to make all these resources available. Good preaching means much labor. To take full possession of the component elements of the discourse ; to

arrange them in proper order ; to give each its due expansion and proportionate fulness ; to brighten and beautify them by the usual resources of rhetoric ; to prove solidly ; to exhort forcibly ; “ *to reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine,*” — all this cannot be done without much thought and serious preparation, remote and proximate. The very lack of culture in the hearers, which dispenses the preacher from a certain kind of care, entails upon him additional care in other ways. He has to bring down his teachings to a more accessible level, to use a vocabulary more intelligible, without being vulgar or trivial, to be more abundant in illustrations, more dramatic and striking in the presentation of his thoughts. The work, besides, thus begun has to be kept up to the end, even by the very best of speakers, under pain of their lapsing into mere verbosity and iteration.

Nor is the preparation all. The best of sermons may be spoiled, and the worst, in a measure, redeemed by the delivery. The power of delivery is a gift to cultivate. Natural imperfections should be steadily combated ; they may never disappear entirely ; but they will be covered to a great extent by three Christian virtues, — faith, humility, charity. A preacher whose soul is full of faith and love, and who, in his concern for his hearers, forgets himself, is almost sure to speak well.

XXXVI

PURITY OF INTENTION

“Attendite ne justitiam vestram faciatis coram hominibus; alioquin mercedem non habebitis apud Patrem vestrum qui in cælis est.”

“Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven.” — MATT. vi. 1.



CHRIST here points out one of the most ordinary ways in which our actions lose their moral value and miss their reward; and that is, doing them to win the good opinion of others. Behind our every action there is a motive, an end we aim at. The action is the means to that end. The end may be good, bad, or indifferent. There are some actions whose end can hardly be anything but good; others whose end is necessarily bad; but the immense majority are such that they may be animated by intentions of any kind, and, as a fact, have behind them a great variety of intentions or ends inspiring the same action, some of which may be good, others indifferent, or positively evil. Thus I may give charity in view of God, and

at the same time for the pleasure I experience in giving (which is indifferent), or for the purpose of being considered generous, which is vain and unworthy. The higher motives generally require an effort; the worthless motives come of themselves, and their constant tendency is to supersede the others, or to mingle so freely and largely with them as to make the action principally their own. Now, so far as they succeed in this, they deprive it of its moral value.

And therefore it is that our Lord again and again warns us against such a danger. In the present instance he borrows an example from each of the three great spheres of duty: God, the neighbor, and self, — prayer, alms-giving, and fasting. Beginning by the second He says: "*If thou dost an alms-deed, sound not thy trumpet;*" *call not the attention of others to it; dread even self-complacency awakened by thy action, and try to hide the good deed even from thyself.* "*Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.*" The same law he applies to prayer: "*When ye pray, be not as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret.*" Finally he says, "*When you fast, be not like the hypocrites who disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. But thou anoint thy head and wash thy face,*" etc.

The same spirit runs through the whole teaching of Christ, — the paramount importance of the inner principle. The absence of it in the Pharisees is the cause of their condemnation; its presence gives to the widow's mite a value in His eyes superior to that of the offerings of all the others. "*This poor widow hath cast in more than they all.*"

Rectitude of intention means the presence of worthy motives; *purity of intention* means the absence of lower motives, or, at least, their relative unimportance, and a constant endeavor to exclude them.

There are few men who need to be watchful in this regard more than priests. Their work is admirable. They spend their days in performing and in preparing for the highest and holiest duties. Yet it is possible for them to bring all down to a low human level; in fact, it is their daily peril to do so. What should be performed for the love of God alone and for the love of souls, they are tempted to do through worldly or even unworthy motives, such as vanity, cupidity, ambition, and the like. How many, alas! who stand high in the esteem of their fellow-men would find their lives hollow and worthless if weighed in the balance of God's judgments! If they would see it with their own eyes, they need only take up what fills their days and their weeks, and, looking beneath the surface, discover what sustains it all. Let them set aside what is done through a mere natural sense of propriety, or in obedience to public opinion, and a dread of its censure, or

through vanity, — the wish to be well thought of, to do themselves credit, to do better than others, to win the favor of their superiors, or to be popular, or for emolument, or for promotion, — let them put aside all that owes its existence to such inspirations in their daily life, and then see what remains. How many awake only in death to the sense of the emptiness of their lives in the sight of God. “*Dormierunt somnum suum, et nihil invenerunt divitiarum in manibus suis.*” — Ps. lxxv. 6.

“*Son, I must be thy supreme and ultimate end if thou desirest to be truly happy. By this intention shall thy affections be purified which too often are irregularly bent upon thyself and things created.*

“*Principally, therefore, refer all things to me, for it is I that have given thee all.*” — IMIT. iii. 9.

XXXVII

THE BARREN FIG-TREE

“ Ut quid etiam terram occupat. ”

“ Why cumbereth it the ground ? ” — LUKE xiii. 7.



FRUIT-TREE is planted and cultivated for the fruit it is expected to bear. If, notwithstanding the suitableness of the soil, it is weak or stunted in growth, or if, having reached its full size, it proves barren, it only remains for the cultivator to remove it, and to plant another in its place. In this familiar mode of action Our Lord tells us that we have a picture of God's dealings with men. “ *Every tree,*” says He in the Sermon on the Mount, “ *that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.*” The same lesson is brought back and dramatized in the brief parable preserved by St. Luke. “ *A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the dresser of the vineyard : Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none. Cut it down therefore ; why cumbereth it the ground ?* ”

Individuals, families, nations, laymen, priests, all

are the objects of God's munificence and loving care. To all he opens endless possibilities, of which they may avail themselves or not. But if they neglect them they do so at their peril. There is no grace or gift of God without its corresponding responsibility. One grows with the other. "*Unto whom much is given, of him much shall be required.*" — LUKE xii. 48. God returns, as it were, from time to time, to see what has come of His favors ; what fruit is borne by those trees which He planted with so much care and in so exuberant a soil.

A serious warning to all, but to none more than to the priest. Of him a twofold harvest is expected, — one in his ministry, the other in his soul. God planted him among His people, to labor for their benefit, and to make them rich in good works. He has often to ask himself what he can present as the result of his labors. So long as he administers the sacraments and offers the Divine Sacrifice, the most careless and lukewarm of priests can always point to some results ; but they will fall short entirely of what might have been expected. Like the barren fig-tree, he is there, drinking in the sunshine from above, and the substance of the soil from below, hindering the growth of what would have flourished outside his shadow, and having little of his own to show but stunted fruits and worthless foliage.

There are priests, alas ! whose ministry has sunk to that low level. At one time active and devoted,

they have gradually grown self-indulgent, and shifted most of the burden on others. What they retain of it is poorly done ; their sermons ill-prepared, their children ill-instructed, their sick neglected. The societies they started or found established are allowed to decline, and finally collapse. The pale hue of death is on all their work. Behind this sad condition of things, there is the spiritual subsidence of the man himself in his private life ; the love of comfort and the lack of prayer ; a certain regard, perhaps, for outward proprieties, but scarce anything of the inner spirit. And no wonder ; faith has weakened, in obedience to the law that he who does not practise what he believes, gradually ceases to believe in what he does not practise.

“Ut quid terram occupat ?” Why is he left to occupy, without profit for himself or for anybody else, a position which so many others would fill with advantage to all ? It is, perhaps, because some soul dear to God is begging, like the vine-dresser in the parable, for a respite in his favor ; — a little more time, — one more season to recover himself, and take up in earnest what he had so long neglected.

If he do so, it is well ; the angels of God will rejoice over it. But if not, then, like the barren tree, *“he shall be cut down.”*

“For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringing forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that

which bringeth forth thorns and briers is reprobate and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt." —
HEB. vi. 78.

" Quod de judæis dictum, omnibus cavendum arbitror, et nobis maxime ; ne fœcundum Ecclesiæ locum vacui meritis occupemus ; qui fructus ferre debemus internos : — fructus pudoris, fructus mutuæ caritatis et amoris."
— AMBROS. in *Lucam*. vii.

XXXVIII

CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND OURS

"Communicantes Christi passionibus, gaudete."

"If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice." — 1 PETER IV. 13.

ONE of the most striking effects of the coming of Christ and of His teachings has been the altered attitude of His followers, and, in some measure, of the world at large, towards suffering. In one shape or another, suffering is the common lot of humanity — man instinctively shuns it. Philosophy could only teach him to harden himself against it. But under the influence of the Gospel, the civilized world has learned to respect it, and the most fervent Christian souls have come to love and to welcome it.

1. "*Blessed* [that is, happy] *"are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake,"* said Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, *"for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."* It is the last of the Beatitudes, the only one developed and emphasized. "*Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and*

speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake."

To live, to labor, to fight for a noble cause, is something that lifts a man high above the common level of existence. But to suffer for it, to be worsted, to endure the humiliation of defeat, and bear it bravely and lovingly, is something higher and greater still; and this was the prospect which Christ held out to his followers. "*Non est discipulus super magistrum: si me persecuti sunt et vos persequentur.*" He spoke these words, it is true, to His apostles alone, but they in turn, applied them to all those whom they had won to the Gospel; and right through their letters we find them taking it for granted that whoever chooses to belong to Christ will have to suffer for it. "*Through many tribulations,*" says St. Paul (Acts xiv. 21), "*we must enter into the Kingdom of God.*" "*If doing well,*" says St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 20), "*you suffer patiently, this is thanksworthy before God. For unto this you are called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His footsteps.*"

St. Paul goes farther: he points to suffering as a condition and a sign of our divine brotherhood with Christ, and shows what follows from it. "*If sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ, yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.*"—ROM. viii. 17.

This union with Christ, effected by suffering, is not merely external or imitative. Christ lives in

the faithful, and they in Him. He suffered in His person, and he continues to suffer in His members. Sufferings endured for Him and for His Gospel become part of His own sufferings. Hence St. Paul (2 Cor. vii. 5), speaks of the sufferings of Christ as abounding in himself; and again more strikingly: (Col. i. 24), "*I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and [thereby] fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His body, which is the church,*" implying thereby that the redeeming work of Christ, considered in its entirety, is not completed in Himself, but has to be "*filled up*" in his members, each one helping by his sufferings to apply the merits of the Redemption, first to himself, and then to others. Thus our sufferings are truly Christ's, as Christ's are ours. What we endure, however insignificant, if it be borne in a truly Christian spirit, is invested with something of the dignity of Christ himself. Whatever we freely take upon ourselves is, in so far, a lightening of the burden of atonement that weighs on our brethren in the faith, and on humanity at large. Nothing of it is lost; and through it, in Christ and with Christ, we are ever helping to redeem the race.

Such thoughts as these were present to the minds of the Saints, sustaining them in a life of universal self-denial and voluntary suffering. Most of them had very little to atone for in their own present or past, yet they led most penitential lives. And they

did so, first, to expiate the sins of others. If pastors of souls, they made themselves responsible for the sins of their people. Like loving fathers, they helped to cancel their children's debts. Again, they bound themselves more closely to Christ by voluntarily sharing his sufferings. Finally, in the austerities which they practised, they found not only untold facilities for prayer, and for the cultivation of charity and of all the other Christian virtues, but also a contentment and joy, which strangers to such a manner of life have never been able to understand.

"If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end, namely, to that place where there will be end of suffering, though here there will be no end. If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and loadest thyself the more ; and, nevertheless, thou must bear it. If thou fling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier." — IMIT. ii. 12.

XXXIX

UNSELFISHNESS

"Cum facis prandium noli vocare vicinos divites . . . sed voca pauperes, debiles, claudos et cæcos."

"When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy neighbors who are rich, lest, perhaps, they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made to thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense; for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just." — LUKE xiv. 12-14.



CHRIST proclaims here what is best in itself, but without meaning to condemn what is less perfect, or expecting that it shall cease to have its place in ordinary human intercourse. In the exercise of hospitality, as in all the other relations of life, there is room for every degree of excellence, from the humblest to the highest. Men act in almost all they do from a variety of motives, some clearly realized, some vaguely felt, some entirely unconscious, yet none the less influencing the doer. These

motives impart to the work their moral character, according to the measure in which they influence it. Consequently the excellence of whatever is done, depends on the dignity, the intensity, and the purity of the motives from which the action proceeds. Motives are pure in proportion as they are unmixed with others of baser alloy. Their intensity is measured by their moving power, and their dignity by the distance that separates them from self.

Now, it has to be remembered that man is incapable of acting habitually through the highest motives, to the exclusion of those less perfect. His nature is complex, open on every side to attractions and impulses which claim their share in his life, and cannot be ignored. Each virtue has its special charm, each vice its corresponding repulsiveness, both destined in the order of Providence to sustain him in a line of action from which he would be sure to swerve if he had nothing but the highest motive—that of pure love—to sustain him. This remark holds good not only of virtuous motives, but of others which in themselves possess no element of virtue. Thus we are led by the natural love of pleasure, or dread of suffering, to give to our bodies the nutriment, the rest, the care, which they require, but which would be neglected in most cases, if the call of nature were not constantly heard. The same natural attraction leads us, in our own interest, to the faithful performance of most of our domestic and social duties.

To the latter belongs the practice of hospitality, including other similar courtesies of civilized life, to which Our Lord refers in the above-mentioned text. To invite a man to share one's meal is a mark of friendly feeling. He is asked to spend with his host an enjoyable hour, and is admitted for the time being to the intimacy of his home. The selfish man invites his friends under the pressure of opinion, or for some selfish end. With the great majority it is a question of mixed motives. Men ask their friends through a friendly feeling, and at the same time with the expectation of some adequate return. The moral value of the act depends on the relative proportion of the two kinds of motives. There is, however, a constant peril of the lower becoming predominant; hence the recommendation of Our Lord, — couched in extreme form, as was His wont, to make it more striking. He did not want to do away with that habitual exchange of courtesies in daily life, which help so powerfully to bring together people of the same social condition, and to bind them more closely to one another. He knew that thereby the better impulses of human nature are awakened and brought into play. He knew, too, that although kindness when entirely unselfish, is best in itself, yet it is not good for anybody to be always a mere benefactor. Such a *rôle* is too apt to beget pride, and even to harden the heart of the giver, unless he values much the gratitude of the recipient. It is good, also, for the latter that he may

be able to make some return. Humility is a good thing, but so is self-respect; and for the uses of daily life the natural sentiment has as much importance as the supernatural virtue.

The lesson of the Saviour amounts, therefore, to this: "*Whenever you do a kindness, think chiefly of those to whom you show it, and as little as possible of yourself. Be unselfish, especially in doing what is ostensibly and professedly generous. And in order to do so effectively, prefer to be kind to those who can make no return.*"

"Son, observe diligently the motives of nature and grace . . . Nature is crafty and always proposes self as her end, but grace walketh in simplicity, and doth all thing purely for God.

"Nature laboreth for its own interests, and considereth what gain it may derive from another; but grace considereth not what may be advantageous to self, but rather what may be beneficial to many.


"Nature is covetous and liketh rather to take than to give; but grace is kind and open hearted, is contented with little, and judgeth more blessed to give than to receive." — IMIT. iii. 54.

XL

THE PRIEST'S HAPPINESS

"Beati oculi qui vident quæ vos videtis."

"Blessed are the eyes which see what you see ; for I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." — LUKE x. 23, 24.

REAT, indeed, was the privilege of the Apostles to be admitted to the intimacy of the Saviour ; to behold with their eyes wonders such as the world had never seen before, and to listen to the words of the divine Teacher as they fell from His sacred lips, — words which humanity has since gathered up, and will never cease to repeat with reverence and love. Great, also, are the privileges of their successors, and happy their lot ; for to them, too, it is given to live amid sights and scenes full of that heavenly joy, of which the outer world catches only rare and rapid glimpses.

Happy indeed is the life of a priest, but not one of unmixed happiness, for such a thing is beyond the reach of mortal man. The priest has to bear his

own share of human sorrow and suffering ; he has, also, to take upon himself a good share of the burden of others. Nor has he the compensation which the worldling finds in the gratification of the senses, or in the triumphs of earthly ambitions. Yet an earthly reward is not denied him. To be looked up to, to be trusted, to be loved, is something highly valued even by the best of men. It is much to bring back peace and joy to souls that have lived for years strangers to one and the other. It is much to devote all one's time and energies to the highest and noblest of purposes, the moral and spiritual elevation of men. From the standpoint of the mere natural man, such a life brings its own reward ; how much more when all this is seen in the light of faith !

1. Nothing helps to give abiding interest to life more than the sense of its usefulness. The consciousness of being helpful to others makes men forget themselves in every sphere of society ; and if those whom they serve are especially dear to them, they can endure much and yet be happy. This may be seen in everyday life, in the case of fathers and mothers who toil unceasingly, suffer many a privation and hardship, and yet never complain, because of the comforts and joys they secure to their little ones. Men raised to high positions, and charged with important duties, are sometimes so completely absorbed by them, that they find little time for rest, and still less for enjoyment ; yet they are happier than they would be in the life of ease and pleasure they might

have had. So is it with the priest. Seen in the light of faith, no existence can compare in usefulness with his ; no interests, however great to human eyes, can compare with those entrusted to him. Each day he goes forth to do the greatest work on earth ; all day long he bears in his hands God's dearest treasures, the immortal souls of his children. How can he be otherwise than happy ?

2. Each day, too, he witnesses the work of God's grace in saints and sinners, and such a vision, contemplated in the light of faith, is one of surpassing beauty. Nothing is fairer on earth than a pure soul ; and each day it is the privilege of the priest to look into the transparent depths of children, artless and ignorant of evil, still bearing, as it were, the recent impress of their baptism ; of others growing into youth, yet having lost scarce anything of their original innocence, — open, trustful, with a wonderful hold on the solemn truths of the faith ; of others, again, disturbed already, and clouded by temptation, fighting bravely, it may be, yet conscious of their weakness, and hastening to shelter themselves under the protecting care and love of their divinely ordained defender. What a privilege to watch over them ! What a joy to preserve them from evil !

3. Yet greater still is the privilege and the joy of raising them up when wounded in the battle of life, and bearing them away, and nursing them back again into health and vigor. The physician who,

by dint of knowledge and thought and care, has rescued a fellow-man from the jaws of death, and restored him to his family, is, indeed, a happy man; but how much more the priest who, by patient, loving care, and by the power which he possesses from above, brings back, day after day, the foolish child, the wayward son, the prodigal, unfaithful husband, to their homes, — the wandering souls to God ! Our Lord himself describes that joy under the familiar and graceful image of the shepherd eager in the pursuit of the lost sheep. “ *And when he hath found it lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing ; and coming home calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them : Rejoice with me because I have found my sheep that was lost.* ” — LUKE xv. 5.

Every day the priest is the guide of the unenlightened and of the perplexed, the helper of the needy, the comforter of the sick and of the afflicted, the refuge of all who suffer and are tried. Like his Master, “ *he goes about,* ” all day long, “ *doing good and healing all, for God is with him.* ” — ACTS x. 38.

4. “ *God is with him.* ” He is God’s representative, God’s messenger. He is the friend of Our Lord : “ *Jam non dicam vos servos, vos autem dixi amicos.* ” He is admitted to the altar on terms of the closest intimacy with Him. He is made a sharer in His divine power ; he is the dispenser of His treasures. His life is a life of unceasing, though unseen, miracles.

O that we should always see it, reverence it, love it, enjoy it thus !

“ Attende quod facit fœnerator : minus vult dare et plus accipere ; hoc fac et tu. Da modica, accipe magna. Da temporalia accipe æterna. Da terram, accipe cælum.” — AUG. in Psalm xxxvi.

XLI

SUCCESS

“Multi dicent mihi in illa die: Domine, Domine, nonne in nomine tuo prophetavimus, et in nomine tuo dæmonia ejecimus, et in nomine tuo virtutes multas fecimus? Et tunc confitebor illis: quia nunquam novi vos.”

“Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you.”
— MATT. vii. 22, 23.



THE day which the Saviour speaks of here and on many other occasions under the emphatic designation of “*that day*,” is the day of judgment, when, by the divine power, all delusion will be dispelled, and the reality of things revealed to each one as regards himself and others. But it is not so easy to see who are the “*many*” to whom Our Lord refers. Doubtless His thought goes forth and embraces, as usual, the whole subsequent history of man; but by His ordinary methods of teaching we are led to suppose that He refers

primarily to things belonging to the present, or to the near future. As a fact, we know (Mark ix. 39) that His name was used with success to expel the evil spirits by men who were not among His followers; this, with something of a similar kind related in the Acts (xix. 3), justifies the conclusion that, before and after the Ascension of Our Lord, many strange and preternatural things, of which no record remains, were done through the invocation of His name by exorcists who, in some way, believed in Him, yet remained strangers to the great truths He had taught, and to the discipline of life He had established. These He represents as claiming, on the last day, admission to His Kingdom, on the ground of having belonged to Him. But He warns them that the connection being only external and apparent, and the true bond of faith and love having been always missing, He will not recognize them as having been at any time His.

This class of men disappeared with the first Christian generation, but the warning remains for all times. It appeals to all those who are tempted to believe that if their work is of a religious character, success in any one direction is enough to win the divine favor. The number of such is great outside the Catholic Church,—philanthropists, reformers, preachers of total abstinence, of Sabbath observance, and the like; nor are they wanting among Catholics. Priests even, doing active successful work, are liable to fall into that manner of

self-delusion. The world judges them, as it judges men generally, by results; and too easily they accept its judgment. In the excitement of their work and in the contemplation of it when done, they are apt to lose sight of God and of their souls. The praises of men blind them to their spiritual destitution. "*I know thy works,*" says Our Lord in the Apocalypse, "*that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead!*" Dead, alas! to piety, dead to prayer, dead to the whole life and spirit of the Gospel. "*Nomen habes quod vivas et mortuus es.*"


We live in a country and in a period of restless activity, of advertising and being advertised, of nervous anxiety for results almost at any cost. How sad to see priests caught up and carried away by the flood, losing the merit of their lives, not to say their very souls, while saving others! Like those of whom Our Lord speaks, they prophesy by the earnestness of their preaching; they cast out devils by the power of the sacraments; they work wonders of material construction and organization; but they are sustained in it all and borne along chiefly by natural impulse, by exuberant activity, by the spirit of pride, by the desire to be talked of by their people and by their fellow priests, by all manner of human motives worthless in the sight of God. Only at the judgment of God—"on that day"—will they know, will the world know, in what depths of spiritual poverty they have lived and died.

XLII

A GOOD NAME

"Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus ut videant bona opera vestra et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in cælis est."

"So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." — MATT. V. 16.

HAT men should be good in the sight of God is not enough. Their goodness should be apparent to their fellow-men. Thereby God is honored. Religion is more respected when the most religious people are found to be in all their dealings the most estimable men. Again, by revealing the goodness that is in them, men help each other to be good. From another point of view, not only is each one benefited in many ways by the good opinion others have of him, but he is thereby enabled to benefit them by the corresponding influence of his judgments and his examples. Hence, in their interest as well as in his own, he may be led, nay, sometimes obliged, to watch over his reputation. This is not necessarily pride or

vanity ; indeed, it finds its sanction in the inspired words of the Wise man : “ *Take care of a good name—curam habe de bono nomine—for this shall continue with thee more than a thousand treasures, precious and great* ” (Eccl. xli. 15), and is confirmed by the above-mentioned words of Our Lord himself.

But then it will be asked, what becomes of the “ *ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari* ” of the Imitation ? What becomes of the lessons of humility taught by the Master himself and by the Saints, and so strikingly emphasized by their examples ?

The Fathers notice the difficulty and supply the answer. The esteem of our fellow-men is at the same time a necessity and a peril ; a necessity, for without it, at least in a certain degree, we cannot hold the position and perform the duties providentially assigned to us ; a peril, for the good opinion of others is the very nutriment upon which vanity sustains itself. We have, therefore, to seek for it, and at the same time to fear it. Ordinary Christians think more of the former ; the Saints think more of the latter ; and they are practically right, for the impulses of worldly wisdom and the instinctive cravings of the natural man will not allow his legitimate claims to be forgotten ; whereas the needs of the soul are easily lost sight of.

True wisdom, therefore, commands that the good opinion of others should be sought for only as dangerous things are handled, — through necessity, and with care.

There are things for which a man may be admired without any other advantage accruing to him or to his admirers. The Christian instinct forbids him to cultivate them. There are others which win him the necessary esteem of those among whom he lives. He seeks that esteem, and is concerned not to lose it, but only in the measure in which it is necessary or serviceable for other worthy ends. He restrains the natural satisfaction he finds in it, because he fears it may lead him away from the strict line of duty. In a word, the good opinion of others is to him a means to be cultivated, so long as it is helpful; but to be dropped as worthless and dangerous, when it can be won and held only at the cost of faithfulness to God.

In the writings and in the life of St. Paul, we find this conception strikingly illustrated. He is anxious that his children should win the approval of those among whom they lived. "*Whatsoever things are true,*" he writes to the Philippians (iv. 8), "*whatsoever just, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, think on these things;*" that is, strive for and practise them. "*Let your modesty be known to all men.*" It was the rule he laid down to others and to himself. "*We forecast what may be good, not only before God, but also before men.*" — 2 COR. viii. 21. On more than one occasion he reminds those he had won to the faith of his perfect disinterestedness. He deals with the alms entrusted to his care in such a way as to preclude all possibility of suspicion. In the

second Epistle to the Corinthians, he enters into an elaborate defence of himself, and enumerates at length his endless labors and sufferings, and even the special favors he had received from heaven. But he does it for the purpose of retaining an influence over them necessary for their good, and he does it with visible reluctance. "*I have become foolish,*" he says, in thus recalling his privileges. "*You have compelled me.*"

But when it is question of mere human qualities, however much appreciated by the Corinthians, he readily disclaims them, and makes himself the least of all. "*For myself I will glory in nothing but in my infirmities !*" In reality he is little concerned, so far as regards himself, about what they think of him, and he tells them so: "*To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day*" (i.e., by any other human judgment). "*He that judgeth me is the Lord.*" He reckons with public opinion so long as it conflicts with no higher law. But if it lead away in any measure from the will of God, he utterly ignores it. Such was the case in regard to the Galatians; he had to choose between displeasing them and maintaining the liberty of the Gospel. "*Do I seek to please men,*" he writes. "*If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*" Welcome or unwelcome, "*by honor or dishonor, by evil report and good report,*" he is resolved to deliver his message as he received it. "*As we were approved, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God*

who proveth our hearts. Neither have we used, at any time, the speech of flattery, as you know, nor sought we the glory of men, neither of you nor of others." —

I THESS. i. 4.

Such is also the rule of the pastor of souls. For reputation in itself he cares little ; but he needs the respect, the confidence, and the affection of the faithful. All these dispositions he has to cultivate, not by any unworthy artifice, or by assuming any quality with which he is not gifted ; not by "*speech of flattery*;" not by any sacrifice of principle, but by a faithful performance of his duties, by unvarying disinterestedness and sincere love of his people. But he has to see to it that nothing shall estrange their hearts from him ; and if misunderstandings arise at any time, he owes it to them as well as to himself, that, like St. Paul, he shall labor to set himself right "*not only before God, but before all men.*"

"Duæ res sunt necessariae, conscientia et fama. Conscientia nostra sufficit nobis, propter alios fama necessaria est. Conscientia tibi, fama proximo tuo. Qui fidens conscientiae suae negligit famam suam, crudelis est in proximum." — AUG., *Sermo I. de Vita Clericorum.*

XLIII

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

"Imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi."

"Be ye followers (imitators, μιμηται) of me as I also am of Christ." — I COR. xi. 1.

MORE than once St. Paul invites the faithful to look to him, and learn from his manner of life what they should be. Already, in an earlier part of this very Epistle (iv. 16), he lays down the same law. He repeats it to the Philippians (iii. 17): "*Be followers of me* (iv. 9). *The things you have learned and seen in me, these do ye,*" and twice to the Thessalonians, (1 Thess. i. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 7), extending the principle in both cases to the companions of his apostolate, Sylvanus and Timothy. "*You yourselves know how you ought to imitate us.*" He thus shows that they too, because of their office, were set up before the faithful, that from their lives as well as from their lessons all might learn what they should be.

Conversely, when St. Paul addresses the teachers themselves, he reminds them that they have to set

the example of what they teach. "*Be thou an example of the faithful,*" he writes to Timothy (I Tim. iv. 12), "*in word, in conversation (i.e. in conduct), in charity, in faith, in chastity.*" And to Titus (ii. 7), "*In all things show thyself an example of good works.*" St. Peter in turn gives similar instructions to the "*ancients,*" or presbyters (I Peter v. 2). "*Feed the flock of God . . . not lording it . . . but being made a pattern.*"

In this, indeed, they were only carrying out the plan of Our Lord himself, who had so clearly told them in the Sermon on the Mount, that they were to be the light of the world chiefly by their examples. "*You are the light of the world; so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*" It was the method He had followed in dealing with them, for He had gathered them around Him, not only to listen to His words, but also to witness His actions, and to learn from his life the life they should follow. "*I have given you an example,*" He says, after washing the disciples' feet, "*that as I have done to you, so you do also.*"

Here, then, we have a law, a method clearly laid down, and to be followed through all ages. Christ is the model of the priest; the priest has to be the model of the people. His example is as much a part of his ministry as preaching, or administering the sacraments. If we could imagine a priest in charge of souls appearing only at the altar, or in

the pulpit, or in the confessional, and then withdrawing himself completely from the view of the faithful, we should have to call him back to live among his people, in order to let them see the full meaning of a practical Christian life. This is so much the mind of the Church, that in conferring each one of the orders, she is careful to impress on those she consecrates the special duty of good example. The "*ostiarius*" is told to open the hearts of the faithful to God, and close them against the evil one "*by word and by example*;" the acolyte is reminded that the lighted taper he bears is a symbol of the shining examples he is bound to show forth; and so on up to the priest, to whom, at every step of his solemn consecration, the great fact is recalled, that henceforth he has to be the embodiment of all the Christian virtues, a fragrant odor of the Gospel, a living rule for the faithful.

The law thus laid down to priests in their preparation, the church has in the course of ages kept steadily before them by the numberless rules, regulations, decrees of her bishops, her popes, and her councils. There is nothing she seems to have had more at heart than to keep her priests at such a height as that all may look to their lives for guidance. What a glorious vocation, and what a powerful incentive to a beautiful life!

"Nihil est quod alios magis ad pietatem et Dei cultum assidue instruat quam eorum vita et exempla

qui se divino ministerio dedicarunt. Cum enim a rebus sæculi in altiore sublati locum conspiciantur, in eos tanquam in speculum reliqui oculos conjiciunt ex iis quae sumant quod imitentur. Quapropter sic omnino decet clericos vitam moresque suos omnes componere, ut habitu, gestu, incessu, sermone, aliisque omnibus rebus nihil nisi grave moderatum ac religione plenum præ se ferant.”—CON. TRID., Sess. xxiv. ci.

XLIV

SPIRITUAL SWEETNESS

“Mane nobiscum quoniam advesperascit et inclinata est jam dies.”

“Stay with us because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.” — LUKE xxiv. 29.



HERE are few incidents in the Gospel narrative more beautiful and touching than that of the disciples of Emmaus. In the vivid picture of St. Luke, we see them as they wend their way to the village of Emmaus, dejected in looks and in heart, discussing the particulars of the dread tragedy they had just witnessed. They had been faithful followers of Our Lord ; they had been won, like so many more, by the beauty of His teachings, and by His wonderful works. They had believed He was about to accomplish the great things that had been promised to their people. But all their hopes had been dashed to the ground by the happenings of the last few days. Jesus, from whom they had expected so much, had been arrested by the public authorities, tried, condemned, and put

to a cruel and ignominious death. True, a ray of reviving hope had dawned upon them that morning with the reports of the holy women ; but it failed to dispel the sadness of their souls ; and so they went their way depressed and desponding. It is then that the Lord approaches unrecognized, enters into their thoughts, enlightens their minds, warms their hearts, yields to their entreaties, and finally disappears, leaving behind Him the divine odor of His presence, with the peace which He alone can give.

Besides the picture we have here of all there is of tenderness and love in the heart of the risen Saviour, we find a striking illustration of His habitual dealings with His children through all ages.

The soul, in its relations with God, has usually its alternating periods of brightness and of darkness ; times of dryness and seeming insensibility, of hopefulness and of fear ; times of unction and heavenly joy. They vary with each individual in power and duration, and form some of the most potent helps or hindrances of the spiritual life. There are souls that live almost constantly in the light ; they carry within them a strong sense of the unseen world. Heaven, hell, God's grace, and God's love are almost as real to them as the visible objects that surround them. The thought of Christ, of what He is to them, and will be through all time, is an abiding, an inexhaustible source of joy. There is in them a youthfulness, a hopefulness, a buoyancy of spirits that makes light of hardship, and carries them through temptation almost without an effort.

This is the condition of spiritual consolation and sweetness which the author of the Imitation so loves to dwell upon. "*Veniet ad te Christus ostendens tibi consolationem suam . . . Frequens illi visitatio cum homine interno, dulcis sermocinatio, grata consolatio, multa pax, familiaritas stupenda nimis*" (Lib. ii. c. 1). And again (Cap. 8): "*Quando Jesus adest, totum bonum est, nec quidquam difficile videtur; Si Jesus tantum verbum loquitur magna consolatio sentitur.*"

But to feel thus uninterruptedly the presence and love of Christ in the soul is the privilege of very few. There are those to whom it is at all times denied; and yet, though weighed down by the cross, they go through life valiantly with little to sustain them beyond the sense of duty, and of loyalty to God. But with the great majority of souls aspiring to a higher life, there is a succession of opposite moods: of hope and of fear, of courage and of weakness, of success and of failure, of joyful turning to God and to His service, and of coldness and distaste for the practices of devotion.

This latter condition is full not only of sadness, but of danger. It weakens the hold of the soul on the realities of faith; it destroys the sense of Christ's abiding presence; it divests His law of its beauty and commanding power; it begets a condition of discouragement and despondency, which leads in turn to neglect, and, it may be, to the total abandonment of the service of God.

It is then that Christ, in his pity and love, reveals

Himself afresh to the souls thus tried. He approaches them, hiding Himself under the ordinary operations of their natural powers. He mingles His thoughts with theirs; He brings back the light by which they see things once more under their true aspects, and in their true colors. He fills their hearts, and makes them feel the normal warmth and flow of life within them. Great is their happiness once again, and gladly would they make it abiding. They beg that it may be so. "*Mane nobiscum, Domine.*" But this cannot be. It is enough that they should have recovered strength to pursue their journey. They know now what to think of the temptations which assailed them, of the darkness which momentarily surrounded them. They must start afresh on the strength of that memory. The occasional flashes of the revolving coast-lights suffice to guide the mariner. Complete happiness, in perfect goodness, is the condition of heaven, not of earth. Here below we have to fight and to win victories. To serve God in the midst of ever-present consolations would imply little sacrifice and little merit. "*It is not hard,*" says the Imitation, "*to despise all human consolations when we have divine. But it is much, and very much, to be able to forego all comfort, both human and divine.*" And therefore it is, that God reserves such trials for his Saints, and tempers for ordinary souls their habitual poverty and weakness by occasional glimpses of Himself, such as He vouchsafed to the disciples of Emmaus.

"Therefore, when God gives spiritual consolation, receive it with thanksgiving; but know that it is God's free gift, and no merit of thine. Be not lifted up, be not overjoyed, nor vainly presume, but rather be the more humble for this gift, more cautious too, and fearful in all thy actions, for that hour will pass away, and temptation follow.

"When consolation shall be taken away from thee do not presently despair, but with humility and patience await the heavenly visitation . . . Even among the great Saints there has often been this kind of vicissitude."

—IMIT. ii. 9.4.

XLV

SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE

"In omnibus teipsum præbe exemplum bonorum operum."

"In all things show thyself an example of good works."—TIT. ii. 7.



HE priest influences the people religiously by every act of his ministry,— by preaching, by administering the sacraments, at the altar, in the confessional, at the bedside of the sick and the dying. But his action is not confined to the performance of such duties. Besides the official influence of the priest, there is the personal influence of the man, — his power of attraction, of persuasion, the gift of winning people gently to what is highest and best. Into this kind of action the whole man enters, — the tone of his mind, his aspirations, his ideals, his whole manner and bearing. Who has not found himself lifted up by contact with persons of a higher nature? Who has not felt all that was petty or mean or unworthy in him hide itself and disappear in presence of those more ex-

alted types of nature and grace? The great art critic, Winckelmann, was wont to say that in presence of the famous statue of Apollo Belvedere, he felt himself assume instinctively a noble attitude. Example, indeed, is the most effective of all means of influence. It is the deepest, the most abiding. Example teaches, exhorts, rebukes; it does all that words can do, and does it better: "*Longum est iter per præcepta, efficax et breve per exempla . . . Verba movent, exempla trahunt.*"

The influence of example makes itself often felt in isolated actions of an extraordinary character, which strike the imagination, and fix their indelible impress on the memory — noble deeds revealing noble souls. But its happiest effects proceed from the even tenor of a beautiful life, as observed in its everyday features. Exhibitions of conventional, professional piety, wherever detected, are positively repulsive; the simple, unostentatious virtue of the true priest brings edification to all. He is a living sermon, teaching all day long, by simple contact, the virtues not only of the Christian, but also of the man; for even in the humbler, yet necessary qualities of the natural life, he feels it due to his character that he should strive to be equal to the best, — upright, honorable, reliable, generous, — and thus be a pattern to his people in all things. Instead of making himself like them, he knows that they want to be like him, and would have him in all things, such as they may look up to and admire. And so

he watches and strives, weeding out of himself all that is low or weak or unworthy, and cultivating what is noblest and best, according to the injunction of the apostle to the Philippians (iv. 8): "*For the rest, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, any praise of discipline, think on these things.*" Thus fashioned he goes forth and mingles with his people,—visibly impressed with the importance of his office, finding no time and having no heart for anything else; accessible, kind, and helpful to all; not speaking of holy and heavenly things to each one, yet leaving behind him, wherever he goes, something of God and of heaven.


"*Sit doctrina et exemplar vitæ tuæ speculum vitæ quod omnibus proponitur ad imitandum, velut archetypus et primitiva quædam imago, omina in se habens quæ bona et honesta sunt.*" — S. CHRYSOST., *Sacerdotio*.

XLVI

SCANDAL

“Væ mundo ā scandalis. Væ homini illi per quem scandalum venit.”

“Wo to the world because of scandals. . . . Wo to that man by whom scandal cometh.”—MATT. xviii. 7.

O man can live in society without influencing those among whom he lives. What he says and what he does is telling, all day long, in a variety of ways known and unknown, for good or for evil, upon those who hear his words and witness his actions.

This is especially true of the priest. He is set up on high, and lives in sight of the people. He is an object of curious interest for them in all the particulars of his daily life. He is observed; he is listened to; much more of him is known than he imagines,—more of his utterances, of his habits, of the character of his thoughts and aspirations; so that, without being distinctly conscious of it, he may be very helpful or very harmful to those around him.

In the latter case the solemn warning of Our

Lord applies to him with special emphasis: "*Wo to that man by whom scandal cometh.*" It may come in many ways and in various degrees. It may, like the sin of the sons of Heli, be such as to keep the faithful from the house of God, or from the practices of Christian piety: "*Erat peccatum filiorum Heli grande nimis coram Domino, quia retrahebant homines a sacrificio Domini*" — I REG. ii. 17; or it may shock and surprise them as something out of keeping with the sacerdotal character, and thereby diminish their trust in the Church and their respect for the priesthood; or again, it may be such as to disappoint them, and destroy their higher Christian ideals, as frequently happens when they find a priest very much like themselves, — in some things, perhaps, not so good. For if a priest differs from the layman only by his sacred character and his official duties; if, in the ordinary course of life, he is just as eager as other men in the pursuit of place or emolument, or as hard and grasping, or as sensitive in his pride, as resentful and unforgiving, or as particular about his ease and comfort, — how can the Christian conception of life keep its hold on those who naturally look to him for a practical illustration of it?

Still more is his influence harmful to those who live in closer contact with him, and in whose presence he throws off all artificial restraint, — personal friends, relatives, domestic servants, fellow priests. What an amount of real harm may be done to all

these by the easy-going, tepid, worldly priest ! What a powerful though silent and insensible encouragement to them to settle down on a low, comfortable level, amid the tangible realities of the present ! How many young priests, alas ! have thus learned to discard salutary restraints, to neglect the blessed devotions of earlier years to waste their time on useless objects, to pamper the flesh,—in a word, to despoil their lives of all supernatural beauty !

“Sunt homines qui putant sibi in bene vivendo sufficere conscientiam, et non valde curant quid de illis aliter existimetur, ignorantes quia cum homo viderit hominem bonæ conscientie negligentius viventem, ædificatur non ad ea quæ perscrutatur, sed ad ea quæ suspicatur : neque enim potest intrare in conscientiam tuam, quam videt Deus. Conscientia tua coram Deo est ; conversatio tua coram fratre tuo, si de te ille aliquid mali suspicans, perturbatus ædificatur ad aliquid faciendum, quod te putat facere, dum sic vivis ; quid prosit, quia venter conscientie tuæ hausit aquam puram, et ille de tua negligentia conversationem bibit turbatam ? ”—S. AUG. (Inter dubia) 1. 9. c. 9.

XLVII

IDEALS, FALSE AND TRUE

"Nisi abundaverit justitia vestra plus quam Scribarum et Phariseorum, non intrabitis in regnum cælorum."

"Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." — MATT. V. 20.



At all times men have had ideals of goodness which they looked up to and admired, and which the best among them have had the ambition to imitate. The popular ideal of the Jews when Christ came, was represented by the Pharisees, — men orthodox in faith, correct in life, ardent in the love of country, strict in the observance of the Law. Such men could not fail to win influence and popularity; and they enjoyed both in a high degree. The people who gathered round Our Saviour on the Mount did not conceive of any form of life higher or better than what they had hitherto looked up to in their accredited teachers; yet He tells them plainly that their qualities were entirely insufficient to secure admittance into His kingdom. What a

shock it must have been to them to hear this for the first time ! But if they will only wait, the divine Teacher will show them how incomplete, and in most cases how hollow, were the lives they so admired.

From the facts of the Gospel narrative, and still more from the unsparing denunciations of Our Lord himself (Matt. xxiii. 13, and foll., Luke xvi. 39, and foll.), we may easily gather what were the shortcomings and vices of the Pharisees. Their "*formalism*," first of all,—their exaggerated concern for externals, for the minutæ of the law, — united with a practical disregard for its fundamental principles. Next, "*their pride*" and self-importance, revealing itself at every step, and leading to hardness of heart, and contempt for others. Finally, "*their ostentation*" and constant display of whatever in their lives and actions could win them the admiration of the people.

The Gospel is the opposite of all this. It leads men back to fundamental things, to the indestructible principles of justice and of love. It teaches them to act righteously for righteousness' sake, to look to God for approval, not to man. It keeps their weaknesses before them, humbles them, and makes them think more of others than of themselves. In a word, the Christian type is the exact opposite of that of the Pharisee, and something incomparably nobler and higher, even in the most unpretending of those who follow it.

Indeed, the Pharisaic type, in its crude, unmitigated form, has become unbearable to the modern mind, fashioned by Christian traditions. But because it is, after all, true to man's natural instincts, it has not entirely disappeared from the world. Something of it may be found even in the life of a priest. He may be good, faithful, zealous ; yet, at the same time, self-important, exacting, sedulous in cultivating public opinion, eager for praise. His composed demeanor and his devotional practices may conceal even from himself much that is mean and selfish. In his concern for minor objects, he may "*neglect the weightier things of the law : judgment, and mercy, and faith ;*" and while "*cleansing the outside of the dish,*" overlook the impurities it may contain.

A priest, too, may select and follow false ideals ; nor is the thing at all uncommon. Thus he may not fully believe in the purely Christian virtues, — such as humility, gentleness, self-denial — or in the special requirements of the priestly character. He may not even believe in the higher forms of natural virtue, all based on self-sacrifice. His ideal may be practically that of the popular priest, the successful priest ; that is, successful in doing external work, or in reaching positions of honor or emolument. His principal ambition may be to secure what will lighten, and lengthen, and sweeten existence — just like any man of the world. And yet, "*unless his justice abound more than that*" of those men to whom he looks up with envy, he is unfit for the work of the


priesthood; and, if he has assumed its responsibilities and fails to bear them, he is unfit for *the kingdom of heaven*.

The truth is, the ideal of the priesthood is not an open question at all. What sort of man a priest ought to be, what is implied in his sacred character, what he is really pledged to by the reception of orders, is determined almost as precisely as the doctrines of faith, and has varied as little in the course of Christian ages. It can be gathered from the Gospel; it is found in St. Paul; it is spread out in the pages of the Fathers, in the enactments of councils, in the teachings of the Saints; and everywhere it is visibly and unmistakably the same.

XLVIII

THE UNFAITHFUL SHEPHERD

EZECHIEL xxxiv. 1-10.

 *ND the word of the Lord came to me, saying: Son of man prophesy, concerning the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to the shepherds:*

"Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the shepherds of Israel that fed themselves; should not the flocks be fed by the shepherd?

"You ate the milk, and you clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat; but my flock you did not feed.

"The weak you have not strengthened.

"And that which was sick you have not healed:

"That which was broken you have not bound up.

"And that which was driven away you have not brought again; neither have you sought that which was lost.

"But you ruled over them with rigor and with a high hand.

"And my sheep were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became the prey of all the beasts

of the field. My flocks were scattered on the face of the earth, and there was none that sought them.

"There was none, I say, that sought them.

"Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

"Behold I myself come upon the shepherds. I will require my flock at their hand; and I will cause them to cease from feeding the flock any more. Neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more, and I will deliver my flock from their mouth, and it shall no more be meat for them."

XLIX

THE DIVINE GUEST

"In propria venit et sui eum non receperunt."

"He came to His own and His own received Him not."—JOHN i. 11.



THE world since Christ came presents two aspects,—one bright and hopeful, the other dark and disheartening. On the one hand, it is no longer the same. By His life and teachings, Christ lighted up its gloomiest spots, and changed its desert wastes into smiling gardens. He brought with Him, and left behind Him for all ages, treasures of peace, of hope, of joy, of strength and courage, in which countless millions of Christian souls have more or less abundantly shared and continue to share. To Christ and to His Gospel, human society owes what has served most to lift it up and to beautify it,—its highest principles and ideals, its purest and noblest types of manhood and womanhood.

But there is the reverse of the medal,—the little use the world has made of the Gospel, compared

with what was meant and what might have been expected. The more one considers this, the sadder the sight and the more striking the truth of the beloved Apostle's sorrowful statement: "*He came unto His own and His own received Him not.*"

1. The whole world, first of all, was His own; because He was God, and because as God man, He had received it from His Father. "*Omnia tradita sunt ā Patre meo* (Matt. xi. 27). He came, then, "*to His own,*" to all men. His purpose was to lead them all to the truth, to win them all to the service of His Heavenly Father. His message went forth to all the races and peoples of the earth: "*Going therefore, teach all nations.*" Yet how strangely impervious whole races have so far proved to the divine appeal,—Hindus, Buddhists, Mahomedans,—forming a large majority of mankind! What a saddening spectacle to contemplate in such an incalculable number of immortal souls, "*seated, unilluminated in the shadow of death! In propria venit et sui eum non receperunt.*"

2. The Jews were His people in a special manner. To them He was promised; by them he was expected; yet when He came, He was so utterly unlike what they looked for, that, notwithstanding the undeniable signs which He gave them of His true character, they refused to recognize Him. The people distrusted Him; and those in power persecuted Him through His public life, and finally put Him ignominiously to death. In them principally

was verified the saying of St. John, "*He came to His own and His own received Him not.*"

3. But, though depriving the world of His visible presence when He ascended into heaven, He left it not entirely. To His disciples, on the eve of His death, He promised repeatedly (John xiv.), that He would come back for them and take them to His heavenly mansion. Meanwhile, he gave them the assurance that He would come and dwell with His Father in all those who would be true to Him: "*Ad eum faciemus et mansionem apud eum faciemus.*" This invisible yet ever so real "*coming*" of Christ "*to His own,*" is presented in the Apocalypse (iii. 20), under a beautiful picture borrowed from the Canticle of Canticles — "*Behold,*" says our Lord, "*I stand at the door and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.*"

Here is Christ coming back to each one, not as a conqueror entering a vanquished city, but as a visitor humbly asking permission to enter. He knocks, He makes Himself known; but He enters only if willingly admitted. Then He makes Himself at home, shares the proffered hospitality; but at the same time, He pays it back a hundredfold. "*I will sup with him, and HE WITH ME.*" This is the intimacy described by the Imitation (l. ii. c. i.): "*Frequens illi visitatio eum homine interno, dulcis sermocinatio, grata consolatio, multa pax, familiaritas stupenda nimis.*" It is in that sense that it has been

said: "*Christus semper venit.*" He is ever coming back, ever knocking, how often, alas! in vain. He comes to the sinner calling him to repentance; to the weak and worldly, inviting them to be strong and to aim at better things; to the self-indulgent, warning them to take the strait way, and make for the narrow gate through which alone they can secure admittance to life everlasting. But the gentle appeal is lost most of the time in the din of worldly sounds, or stifled by the discordant voices of human passions. "*He came to His own, and His own received Him not.*" .

Yet there are some — there are many — (though few when compared to the others) who listen, who open to and welcome the Divine Visitor. Such were the Saints. Oh, how readily, how joyfully, how generously, they received Him! And how rich in return was their reward! The same is true of numberless souls at the present, — watchful, recollected, ever alive and obedient to the promptings of grace. It is in these faithful souls that Christ finds a compensation for the hardness of sinners and the apathy of the lukewarm.

For such a compensation he looks, first of all, to His priests whom He has placed so near to himself, and to whom He comes each day in so real and wonderful a way in the Eucharistic mystery. There indeed He is always received bodily; but surely it is not the lips alone that should be opened to Him; it is the whole soul,— every power, every

faculty, of the inner man, — thought, memory, fancy, feeling, the inmost depths of the heart, and the whole energy of the will.

“De plenitudine ejus nos omnes accepimus ; ipse fons est et radix bonorum omnium ; ipse vita, ipse lux, ipse veritas, non solum in seipso bonorum divitias continens, sed in universos diffundens.” — CHRYS., in Joan.

L

DETACHMENT

"Ecce nos reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te."

"Behold, we have left all things and have followed thee." —MATT. xix. 27.



READINESS to leave everything for Christ's sake is the duty of all those who claim to be His followers. He has to be the first in their thoughts and in their lives. Every human affection, however legitimate, and however deep, must be held in subservience to His love. *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."* —MATT. x. 37.

In ordinary circumstances Our Lord requires little more. In St. Luke indeed (xiv. 33), he seems to demand an actual separation. *"Everyone of you who doth not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple;"* yet we know that in reality He leaves His children in the pursuit and in the enjoyment of the same objects as appeal to other men, but always on condition that **they be ready to give up whatever**

may interfere with the service they owe Him. They may be often engrossed with the things of this world, but not so as to forget their allegiance to Him, and to His law. They are not in reality, nor do they claim to be, independent and free. They are the servants of Christ, they are His soldiers, ever holding themselves in readiness to drop what engages them in order to carry out His commands. This is Christian detachment; not, as is sometimes imagined, a setting aside of all earthly ambition or human affection, but a freedom concerning them which permits one to sacrifice them each and all, when desirable, for a higher good. Excessive attachment enslaves the will; detachment tempers without destroying the natural affections, or counterpoises them by the expansion of the higher aspirations. In either case it looses the bond and sets free.

But there are special vocations which imply much more. Those whose lives are given up exclusively to the service of God, of their country, of their fellow-men, have to relinquish many things which others continue to enjoy. The soldier in time of war, the physician in the midst of an epidemic, have to give up for the time being, home, family, necessary comforts. The religious, bound by his vows, detaches himself practically from much that he might otherwise enjoy. This is *effective detachment*, — a real separation from what appeals strongly to the senses or to the affections. As a spiritual practice, it serves to counteract the more dangerous tendencies

of nature, it being often easier to deny them absolutely than to keep them within proper bounds.

In what manner and in what measure should detachment be found in the heart and life of a priest? The answer comes in the words of St. Peter: "*Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee.*" When Christ called His apostles, without hesitation or delay they left everything and followed Him. Of Peter and Andrew we read that "*immediately leaving their nets they followed Him;*" . . . and of James and John, that "*leaving their father, Zebedee, with the hired men, they followed Him.*" — MARK i. 18. Of St. Matthew we are told that when Christ was passing by, "*He saw him sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith to him: Follow me. And rising up he followed Him.*" — MARK ii. 14.

That was the end of their worldly prospects. From that on they clung to the Saviour, and thought of nothing else. When first He sent them to prepare the way for Him, He directed them "*to take nothing on their journey, neither staff, nor scrip, nor bread, nor money.*" — LUKE ix. 3; and when their mission had been completed by the gift of the Spirit, they went forth in the same condition, free and fearless, owning nothing, concerned about nothing beyond their food and raiment: "*Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content.*" — 1 TIM. vi. 8. Here we have the ideal type of the priestly vocation. Responding to the divine call, the chosen one abandons

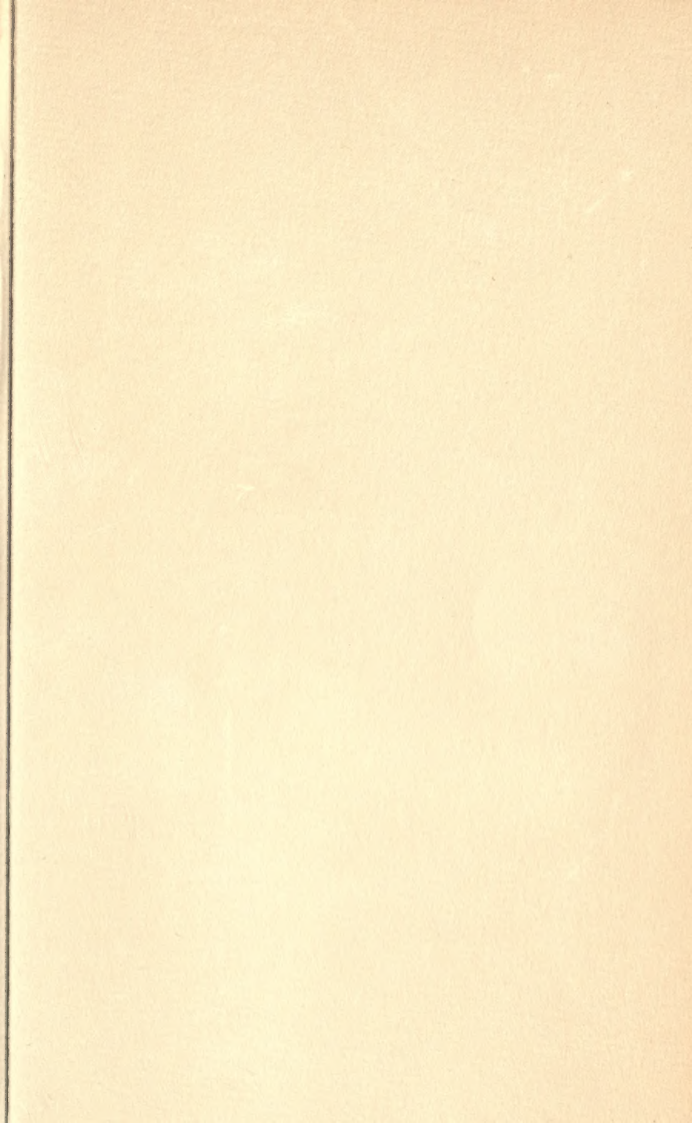
all worldly interests, pursuits, and prospects. He belongs henceforth to his work and to nothing else. To those who would lead him back to what he has abandoned, he answers in the words of Our Lord Himself. "*Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?*" For that great end he sets aside what he had hitherto most enjoyed, the sweets, it may be, of family life, or the society of friends, or his favorite intellectual pursuits, or the cultivation of some special gifts. What he may henceforth enjoy of such things is only what comes to him as an accident, or what he allows himself as a necessary relaxation, or what assumes the character of a positive duty.

The more fully he enters into the spirit of his calling, the more completely he weans himself from what might interfere with it. Friends and family find themselves gradually neglected and forsaken; not that he loves them less, but that he distrusts himself, and fears lest his love for them may lessen his devotion to the work of God. Thus we read of St. Francis Xavier, that when preparing to start for India, he declined to visit his home, although passing close by. He feared it might weaken the strength of his resolve.

The very objects that are dearest to one thus disposed, and are on that account most of an obstacle in his way, lead not only to apparent coldness and indifference, but to a seeming positive dislike. They are disliked because they interfere with what he has

most at heart, as children when they thoughtlessly interfere with the serious occupations of their parents. This is what Christ meant when setting forth what he required of those who would pledge themselves to serve Him with fullest devotion, He actually spoke of turning love into hatred: "*If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*" — LUKE xiv. 26.

"*Multum deseruit qui voluntatem habendi dereliquit.*" — ST. BERNARD.



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Daily thoughts for
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